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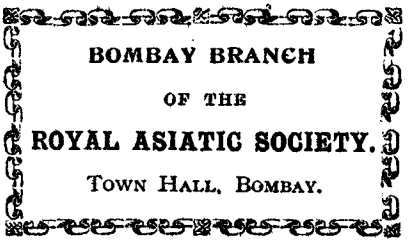

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HAROLD

A DRAMA

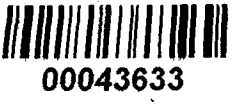
43633

BY

ALFRED TENNYSON

HENRY S. KING & CO., LONDON

1877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To his Excellency

THE RIGHT HON. LORD LYTTON,

VICEROY AND GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA.

My dear Lord Lytton,

After old-world records—such as the Bayeux tapestry and the Roman de Rou,—Edward Freeman's History of the Norman Conquest, and your father's Historical Romance treating of the same times, have been mainly helpful to me in writing this Drama. Your father dedicated his 'Harold' to my father's brother; allow me to dedicate my 'Harold' to yourself.

A. TENNYSON.

SHOW-DAY AT BATTLE ABBEY, 1876.

A GARDEN here—May breath and bloom of spring—
The cuckoo yonder from an English elm
Crying 'with my false egg I overwhelm
The native nest:' and fancy hears the ring
Of harness, and that deathful arrow sing,
And Saxon battleaxe clang on Norman helm.
Here rose the dragon-banner of our realm:
Here fought, here fell, our Norman-slander'd king.
O Garden blossoming out of English blood!
O strange hate-healer Time! We stroll and stare
Where might made right eight hundred years ago;
Might, right? ay good, so all things make for good—
But he and he, if soul be soul, are where
Each stands full face with all he did below.

Dramatis Personæ.

KING EDWARD THE CONFESSOR.

STIGAND (created Archbishop of Canterbury by the Antipope Benedict).

ALDRED (Archbishop of York).

THE NORMAN BISHOP OF LONDON.

HAROLD, Earl of Wessex, afterwards King of England
TOSTIG, Earl of Northumbria
GURTH, Earl of East Anglia
LEOFWIN, Earl of Kent and Essex
WULFNOTH
} Sons of Godwin.

COUNT WILLIAM OF NORMANDY.

WILLIAM RUFUS.

WILLIAM MALET (a Norman Noble).*

EDWIN, Earl of Mercia
MORCAR, Earl of Northumbria after Tostig
} Sons of Alfgar of Mercia.

GAMEL (a Northumbrian Thane).

GUY (Count of Ponthieu).

ROLF (a Ponthieu Fisherman).

HUGH MARGOT (a Norman Monk).

OSGOD and ATHELRIC (Canons from Waltham).

THE QUEEN (Edward the Confessor's Wife, Daughter of Godwin).

ALDWYTH (Daughter of Alfgar and Widow of Griffyth, King of Wales).

EDITH (Ward of King Edward).

Courtiers, Earls and Thanes, Men-at-Arms, Canons of Waltham, Fishermen, &c.

* . . . quidam partim Normannus et Anglus
Compater Heraldi. (*Guy of Amiens*, 587.)

HAROLD.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—LONDON. THE KING'S PALACE.

(A comet seen through the open window.)

ALDWYTH, GAMEL, COURTIERS *talking together.*

FIRST COURTIER.

Lo! there once more—this is the seventh night!
Yon grimly-glaring, treble-brandish'd scourge
Of England!

SECOND COURTIER.

Horrible!

FIRST COURTIER.

Look you, there's a star
That dances in it as mad with agony!

THIRD COURTIER.

Ay, like a spirit in Hell who skips and flies
To right and left, and cannot scape the flame.

SECOND COURTIER.

Steam'd upward from the undescendable
Abysm.

FIRST COURTIER.

Or floated downward from the throne
Of God Almighty.

ALDWYTH.

Gamel, son of Orm,
What thinkest thou this means?

GAMEL.

War, my dear lady!

ALDWYTH.

Doth this affright thee?

GAMEL.

Mightily, my dear lady!

ALDWYTH.

Stand by me then, and look upon my face,
[illegible] the comet.

Enter MORCAR.

Brother! why so pale?

MORCAR.

It glares in heaven, it flares upon the Thames,
The people are as thick as bees below,
They hum like bees,—they cannot speak—for awe;
Look to the skies, then to the river, strike
Their hearts, and hold their babies up to it.
I think that they would Molochize them too,
To have the heavens clear.

ALDWYTH.

They fright not me.

(*Enter* LEOFWIN, *after him* GURTH.)

Ask thou Lord Leofwin what he thinks of this!

MORCAR.

Lord Leofwin, dost thou believe, that these
Three rods of blood-red fire up yonder mean
The doom of England and the wrath of Heaven?

BISHOP OF LONDON (*passing*).

Did ye not cast with bestial violence
Our holy Norman bishops down from all

Their thrones in England? I alone remain.
Why should not Heaven be wroth?

LEOFWIN.

With us, or thee?

BISHOP OF LONDON.

Did ye not outlaw your archbishop Robert,
Robert of Jumiéges—well-nigh murder him too?
Is there no reason for the wrath of Heaven?

LEOFWIN.

Why then the wrath of Heaven hath three tails,
The devil only one. [*Exit* BISHOP OF LONDON.

(*Enter* ARCHBISHOP STIGAND.)

Ask *our* Archbishop.
Stigand should know the purposes of Heaven.

STIGAND.

Not I. I cannot read the face of heaven,
Perhaps our vines will grow the better for it.

LEOFWIN (*laughing*).

He can but read the king's face on his coins.

STIGAND.

Ay, young lord, *there* the king's face is power.

GURTH.

O father mock not at a public fear,
But tell us, is this pendent hell in heaven
A harm to England?

STIGAND.

Ask it of King Edward!
And he may tell thee, *I* am a harm to England.
Old uncanonical Stigand—ask of *me*
Who had my pallium from an Antipope!
Not he the man—for in our windy world
What's up is faith, what's down is heresy.
Our friends, the Normans, holp to shake his chair.
I have a Norman fever on me, son,
And cannot answer sanely . . . What it means?
Ask our broad Earl. [*Pointing to* HAROLD, *who enters.*

HAROLD (*seeing* GAMEL).

Hail, Gamel, son of Orm!
Albeit no rolling stone, my good friend Gamel,
Thou hast rounded since we met. Thy life at home
Is easier than mine here. Look! am I not
Work-wan, flesh-fallen?

GAMEL.

Art thou sick, good Earl

HAROLD.

Sick as an autumn swallow for a voyage,
Sick for an idle week of hawk and hound
Beyond the seas—a change! When camest thou hither?

GAMEL.

To-day, good Earl.

HAROLD.

Is the North quiet, Gamel?

GAMEL.

Nay, there be murmurs, for thy brother breaks us
With over-taxing—quiet, ay, as yet—
Nothing as yet.

HAROLD.

Stand by him, mine old friend,
Thou art a great voice in Northumberland!
Advise him: speak him sweetly, he will hear thee.
He is passionate but honest. Stand thou by him!
More talk of this to-morrow, if yon weird sign
Not blast us in our dreams.—Well, father Stigand—

[*To* STIGAND, *who advances to him.*

STIGAND (*pointing to the comet*).

[illegible]ere, my son? is that the doom of England?

HAROLD.

Why not the doom of all the world as well?
For all the world sees it as well as England.
These meteors came and went before our day,
Not harming any: it threatens us no more
Than French or Norman. War? the worst that follows
Things that seem jerk'd out of the common rut
Of Nature is the hot religious fool,
Who, seeing war in heaven, for heaven's credit
Makes it on earth: but look, where Edward draws
A faint foot hither, leaning upon Tostig.
He hath learnt to love our Tostig much of late.

LEOFWIN.

And *he* hath learnt, despite the tiger in him,
To sleek and supple himself to the king's hand.

GURTH.

I trust the kingly touch that cures the evil
May serve to charm the tiger out of him.

LEOFWIN.

He hath as much of cat as tiger in him.
Our Tostig loves the hand and not the man.

HAROLD.

Nay! Better die than lie!

Enter KING, QUEEN *and* TOSTIG.

EDWARD.

In heaven signs!
Signs upon earth! signs everywhere! your Priests
Gross, worldly, simoniacal, unlearn'd!
They scarce can read their Psalter; and your churches
Uncouth, unhandsome, while in Normanland
God speaks thro' abler voices, as He dwells
In statelier shrines. I say not this, as being
Half Norman-blooded, nor as some have held,
Because I love the Norman better—no,
But dreading God's revenge upon this realm
For narrowness and coldness: and I say it
For the last time perchance, before I go
To find the sweet refreshment of the Saints.
I have lived a life of utter purity:
I have builded the great church of Holy Peter:
I have wrought miracles—to God the glory—
And miracles will in my name be wrought
Hereafter.—I have fought the fight and go—
I see the flashing of the gates of pearl—
And it is well with me, tho' some of you
Have scorn'd me—ay—but after I am gone
Woe, woe to England! I have had a vision;
The seven sleepers in the cave at Ephesus
Have turn'd from right to left.

HAROLD.

My most dear Master,
What matters? let them turn from left to right
And sleep again.

TOSTIG.

Too hardy with thy king!
A life of prayer and fasting well may see
Deeper into the mysteries of heaven
Than thou, good brother.

ALDWYTH (*aside*).

Sees he into thine,
That thou wouldst have his promise for the crown?

EDWARD.

Tostig says true; my son, thou art too hard,
Not stagger'd by this ominous earth and heaven:
But heaven and earth are threads of the same loom,
Play into one another, and weave the web
That may confound thee yet.

HAROLD.

Nay, I trust not,
For I have served thee long and honestly.

EDWARD.

I know it, son; I am not thankless: thou
Hast broken all my foes, lighten'd for me
The weight of this poor crown, and left me time
And peace for prayer to gain a better one.
Twelve years of service! England loves thee for it.
Thou art the man to rule her!

ALDWYTH (*aside*).

So, not Tostig!

HAROLD.

And after those twelve years a boon, my king,
Respite, a holiday: thyself wast wont
To love the chase: thy leave to set my feet
On board, and hunt and hawk beyond the seas!

EDWARD.

What, with this flaming horror overhead?

HAROLD.

Well, when it passes then.

EDWARD.

Ay if it pass.
Go not to Normandy—go not to Normandy.

HAROLD.

And wherefore not, my king, to Normandy?
Is not my brother Wulfnoth hostage there
For my dead father's loyalty to thee?
I pray thee, let me hence and bring him home.

EDWARD.

Not thee, my son: some other messenger.

HAROLD.

And why not me, my lord, to Normandy?
Is not the Norman Count thy friend and mine?

EDWARD.

I pray thee, do not go to Normandy.

HAROLD.

Because my father drove the Normans out
Of England?—That was many a summer gone—
Forgotten and forgiven by them and thee.

EDWARD.

Harold, I will not yield thee leave to go.

HAROLD.

Why then to Flanders. I will hawk and hunt
In Flanders.

EDWARD.

Be there not fair woods and fields
In England? Wilful, wilful. Go—the Saints
Pilot and prosper all thy wandering out
And homeward. Tostig, I am faint again.
Son Harold, I will in and pray for thee.

[*Exit, leaning on* TOSTIG, *and followed by* STIGAND, MORCAR, *and* Courtiers.

HAROLD.

What lies upon the mind of our good king
That he should harp this way on Normandy?

QUEEN.

Brother, the king is wiser than he seems;
And Tostig knows it; Tostig loves the king.

HAROLD.

And love should know; and—be the king so wise,—
Then Tostig too were wiser than he seems.
I love the man but not his phantasies.

(*Re-enter* TOSTIG.)

Well, brother,
When didst thou hear from thy Northumbria?

TOSTIG.

When did I hear aught but this '*When*' from thee?
Leave me alone, brother, with my Northumbria:
She is *my* mistress, let *me* look to her!
The King hath made me Earl; make me not fool!
For make the King a fool, who made me Earl!

HAROLD.

No, Tostig—lest I make myself a fool
Who made the King who made thee, make thee Earl.

TOSTIG.

Why chafe me then? Thou knowest I soon go wild.

GURTH.

Come, come! as yet thou art not gone so wild
But thou canst hear the best and wisest of us.

HAROLD.

So says old Gurth, not I: yet hear! thine earldom,
Tostig, hath been a kingdom. Their old crown
Is yet a force among them, a sun set
But leaving light enough for Alfgar's house
To strike thee down by—nay, this ghastly glare
May heat their fancies.

TOSTIG.

My most worthy brother,
That art the quietest man in all the world—
Ay, ay and wise in peace and great in war—
Pray God the people choose thee for their king!
But all the powers of the house of Godwin
Are not enframed in thee.

HAROLD.

Thank the Saints, no!
But thou hast drain'd them shallow by thy tolls,
And thou art ever here about the King:
Thine absence well may seem a want of care.
Cling to their love; for, now the sons of Godwin
Sit topmost in the field of England, envy,
Like the rough bear beneath the tree, good brother,
Waits till the man let go.

TOSTIG.

Good counsel truly!
I heard from my Northumbria yesterday.

HAROLD.

How goes it then with thy Northumbria? Well?

TOSTIG.

And wouldst thou that it went aught else than well?

HAROLD.

I would it went as well as with mine earldom,
Leofwin's and Gurth's.

TOSTIG.

Ye govern milder men.

GURTH.

We have made them milder by just government.

TOSTIG.

Ay, ever give yourselves your own good word.

LEOFWIN.

An honest gift, by all the Saints, if giver
And taker be but honest! but they bribe
Each other, and so often, an honest world
Will not believe them.

HAROLD.

I may tell thee, Tostig,
I heard from thy Northumberland to-day.

TOSTIG.

From spies of thine to spy my nakedness
In my poor North!

HAROLD.

There is a movement there,
A blind one—nothing yet.

TOSTIG.

Crush it at once
With all the power I have!—I must—I will!—
Crush it half-born! Fool still? or wisdom there,
My wise head-shaking Harold?

HAROLD.

Make not thou
The nothing something. Wisdom when in power
And wisest, should not frown as Power, but smile
As kindness, watching all, till the true *must*
Shall make her strike as Power: but when to strike—
O Tostig, O dear brother—If they prance,
Rein in, not lash them, lest they rear and run
And break both neck and axle.

TOSTIG.

Good again!
Good counsel tho' scarce needed. Pour not water
In the full vessel running out at top
To swamp the house.

LEOFWIN.

Nor thou be a wild thing
Out of the waste, to turn and bite the hand
Would help thee from the trap.

TOSTIG.

Thou playest in tune.

LEOFWIN.

To the deaf adder thee, that wilt not dance
However wisely charm'd.

TOSTIG.

No more, no more

GURTH.

Likewise cry 'no more.' Unwholesome talk
For Godwin's house! Leofwin, thou hast a tongue!
Tostig, thou lookst as thou would'st spring upon him.
St. Olaf, not while I am by! Come, come,
Join hands, let brethren dwell in unity;
Let kith and kin stand close as our shield-wall,
Who breaks us then? I say, thou hast a tongue,
And Tostig is not stout enough to bear it.
Vex him not, Leofwin.

TOSTIG.

No, I am not vext,—
Altho' ye seek to vex me, one and all.
I have to make report of my good earldom
To the good king who gave it—not to you—
Not any of you.—I am not vext at all.

HAROLD.

The king? the king is ever at his prayers;
In all that handles matter of the state
I am the king.

TOSTIG.

That shalt thou never be
If I can thwart thee.

HAROLD.

Brother, brother!

TOSTIG.

Away!

[*Exit* TOSTIG.

QUEEN.

Spite of this grisly star ye three must gall
Poor Tostig.

LEOFWIN.

Tostig, sister, galls himself,
He cannot smell a rose but pricks his nose
Against the thorn, and rails against the rose.

QUEEN.

I am the only rose of all the stock
That never thorn'd him; Edward loves him, so
Ye hate him. Harold always hated him.
Why—how they fought when boys—and, Holy Mary!
How Harold used to beat him!

HAROLD.

Why, boys will fight.
Leofwin would often fight me, and I beat him.
Elven old Gurth would fight. I had much ado
To hold mine own against old Gurth. Old Gurth,
We fought like great states for grave cause; but Tostig—
On a sudden—at a something—for a nothing—
The boy would fist me hard, and when we fought
I conquer'd, and he loved me none the less,
Till thou wouldst get him all apart, and tell him
That where he was but worsted, he was wrong'd.
Ah! thou hast taught the king to spoil him too;
Now the spoilt child sways both. Take heed, take heed;
Thou art the Queen; ye are boy and girl no more:

Side not with Tostig in any violence,
Lest thou be sideways guilty of the violence.

QUEEN.

Come fall not foul on me. I leave thee, brother.

HAROLD.

Nay, my good sister—

[*Exeunt* QUEEN, HAROLD, GURTH, *and* LEOFWIN.

ALDWYTH.

Gamel, son of Orm,
What thinkest thou this means? [*Pointing to the comet.*

GAMEL.

War, my dear lady,
War, waste, plague, famine, all malignities.

ALDWYTH.

It means the fall of Tostig from his earldom.

GAMEL.

That were too small a matter for a comet!

ALDWYTH.

It means the lifting of the house of Alfgar.

GAMEL.

Too small! a comet would not show for that!

ALDWYTH.

Not small for thee, if thou canst compass it.

GAMEL.

Thy love?

ALDWYTH.

As much as I can give thee, man;
This Tostig is, or like to be, a tyrant;
Stir up thy people: oust him!

GAMEL.

And thy love?

ALDWYTH.

As much as thou canst bear.

GAMEL.

I can bear all,
And not be giddy.

ALDWYTH.

No more now: to-morrow.

SCENE II.—IN THE GARDEN. THE KING'S HOUSE NEAR LONDON. SUNSET.

EDITH.

Mad for thy mate, passionate nightingale . . .
I love thee for it—ay, but stay a moment;
He can but stay a moment: he is going.
I fain would hear him coming! . . . near me . . . near,
Somewhere—To draw him nearer with a charm
Like thine to thine.

(*Singing.*)

Love is come with a song and a smile,
Welcome Love with a smile and a song:
Love can stay but a little while.
Why cannot he stay? They call him away:
Ye do him wrong, ye do him wrong;
Love will stay for a whole life long.

Enter HAROLD.

HAROLD.

The nightingales at Havering-in-the-bower
Sang out their loves so loud, that Edward's prayers

Were deafen'd, and he pray'd them dumb, and thus
I dumb thee too, my wingless nightingale! [*Kissing her.*

EDITH.

Thou art my music! Would their wings were mine
To follow thee to Flanders! Must thou go?

HAROLD.

Not must, but will. It is but for one moon.

EDITH.

Leaving so many foes in Edward's hall
To league against thy weal. The Lady Aldwyth
Was here to-day, and when she touch'd on thee,
She stammer'd in her hate; I am sure she hates thee,
Pants for thy blood.

HAROLD.

Well, I have given her cause—
I fear no woman.

EDITH.

Hate not one who felt
Some pity for thy hater! I am sure
Her morning wanted sunlight, she so praised
The convent and lone life—within the pale—
Beyond the passion. Nay—she held with Edward,

At least methought she held with holy Edward,
That marriage was half sin.

HAROLD.

A lesson worth
Finger and thumb—thus (*snaps his fingers*). And my answer to it—
See here—an interwoven H and E!
Take thou this ring; I will demand his ward
From Edward when I come again. Ay, would she?
She to shut up my blossom in the dark!
Thou art *my* nun, thy cloister in mine arms.

EDITH (*taking the ring*).

Yea, but Earl Tostig—

HAROLD.

That's a truer fear!
For if the North take fire, I should be back;
I shall be, soon enough.

EDITH.

Ay, but last night
An evil dream that ever came and went—

HAROLD.

A gnat that vext thy pillow! Had I been by
I would have spoil'd his horn. My girl, what was it?

EDITH.

Oh! that thou wert not going!
For so methought it was our marriage-morn,
And while we stood together, a dead man
Rose from behind the altar, tore away
My marriage ring, and rent my bridal veil;
And then I turn'd, and saw the church all fill'd
With dead men upright from their graves, and all
The dead men made at thee to murder thee,
But thou didst back thyself against a pillar,
And strike among them with thy battle-axe—
There, what a dream!

HAROLD.

Well, well—a dream—no more!

EDITH.

Did not Heaven speak to men in dreams of old?

HAROLD.

Ay—well—of old. I tell thee what, my child;
Thou hast misread this merry dream of thine,
Taken the rifted pillars of the wood

For smooth stone columns of the sanctuary,
The shadows of a hundred fat dead deer
For dead men's ghosts. True, that the battle-axe
Was out of place ; it should have been the bow.—
Come, thou shalt dream no more such dreams ; I swear it,
By mine own eyes—and these two sapphires—these
Twin rubies, that are amulets against all
The kisses of all kind of womankind
In Flanders, till the sea shall roll me back
To tumble at thy feet.

EDITH.

That would but shame me
Rather than make me vain. The sea may roll
Sand, shingle, shore-weed, not the living rock
Which guards the land.

HAROLD.

Except it be a soft one,
And undereaten to the fall. Mine amulet . . .
This last . . . upon thine eyelids, to shut in
A happier dream. Sleep, sleep, and thou shalt see
My grayhounds fleeting like a beam of light,
And hear my peregrine and her bells in heaven ;
And other bells on earth, which yet are heaven's ;
Guess what they be.

EDITH.

He cannot guess who knows.
Farewell, my king.

HAROLD.

Not yet, but then—my queen.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter ALDWYTH *from the thicket.*

ALDWYTH.

The kiss that charms thine eyelids into sleep,
Will hold mine waking. Hate him? I could love him
More, tenfold, than this fearful child can do;
Griffyth I hated: why not hate the foe
Of England? Griffyth when I saw him flee,
Chased deer-like up his mountains, all the blood
That should have only pulsed for Griffyth, beat
For his pursuer. I love him or think I love him.
If he were King of England, I his queen,
I might be sure of it. Nay, I do love him.—
She must be cloister'd somehow, lest the king
Should yield his ward to Harold's will. What harm?
She hath but blood enough to live, not love.—
When Harold goes and Tostig, shall I play
The craftier Tostig with him? fawn upon him?
Chime in with all? 'O thou more saint than king!'

And that were true enough. 'O blessed relics!'
'O Holy Peter!' If he found me thus,
Harold might hate me; he is broad and honest,
Breathing an easy gladness . . . not like Aldwyth . . .
For which I strangely love him. Should not England
Love Aldwyth, if she stay the feuds that part
The sons of Godwin from the sons of Alfgar
By such a marrying? Courage, noble Aldwyth!
Let all thy people bless thee!
Our wild Tostig,
Edward hath made him Earl: he would be king:—
The dog that snapt the shadow, dropt the bone.—
I trust he may do well, this Gamel, whom
I play upon, that he may play the note
Whereat the dog shall howl and run, and Harold
Hear the king's music, all alone with him,
Pronounced his heir of England.
I see the goal and half the way to it.—
Peace-lover is our Harold for the sake
Of England's wholeness—so—to shake the North
With earthquake and disruption—some division—
Then fling mine own fair person in the gap
A sacrifice to Harold, a peace-offering,
A scape-goat marriage—all the sins of both
The houses on mine head—then a fair life
And bless the Queen of England.

MORCAR (*coming from the thicket*).

Art thou assured
By this, that Harold loves but Edith?

ALDWYTH.

Morcar!
Why creepst thou like a timorous beast of prey
Out of the bush by night?

MORCAR.

I follow'd thee.

ALDWYTH.

Follow my lead, and I will make thee earl.

MORCAR.

What lead then?

ALDWYTH.

Thou shalt flash it secretly
Among the good Northumbrian folk, that I—
That Harold loves me—yea, and presently
That I and Harold are betroth'd—and last—
Perchance that Harold wrongs me; tho' I would not
That it should come to that.

MORCAR.

I will both flash
And thunder for thee.

ALDWYTH.

I said 'secretly;'
It is the flash that murders, the poor thunder
Never harm'd head.

MORCAR.

But thunder may bring down
That which the flash hath stricken.

ALDWYTH.

Down with Tostig!
That first of all.—And when doth Harold go?

MORCAR.

To-morrow—first to Bosham, then to Flanders.

ALDWYTH.

Not to come back till Tostig shall have shown
And redden'd with his people's blood the teeth
That shall be broken by us—yea, and thou

Chair'd in his place. Good-night, and dream thyself
Their chosen Earl. [*Exit* ALDWYTH.

MORCAR.

Earl first, and after that
Who knows I may not dream myself their king!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—SEASHORE. PONTHIEU. NIGHT.

HAROLD *and his* Men, *wrecked.*

HAROLD.

Friends, in that last inhospitable plunge
Our boat hath burst her ribs; but ours are whole;
I have but bark'd my hands.

ATTENDANT.

I dug mine into
My old fast friend the shore, and clinging thus
Felt the remorseless outdraught of the deep
Haul like a great strong fellow at my legs,
And then I rose and ran. The blast that came
So suddenly hath fallen as suddenly—
Put thou the comet and this blast together—

HAROLD.

Put thou thyself and mother-wit together.
Be not a fool!

(*Enter* Fishermen *with torches*, HAROLD *going up to one of them*, ROLF.)

Wicked sea-will-o'-the-wisp !
Wolf of the shore ! dog, with thy lying lights
Thou hast betray'd us on these rocks of thine !

ROLF.

Ay, but thou liest as loud as the black herring-pond behind thee. We be fishermen, I came to see after my nets.

HAROLD.

To drag us into them. Fishermen ? devils !
Who, while ye fish for men with your false fires,
Let the great Devil fish for your own souls.

ROLF.

Nay then, we be liker the blessed Apostles ; *they* were fishers of men, Father Jean says.

HAROLD.

I had liefer that the fish had swallowed me,
Like Jonah, than have known there were such devils.
What's to be done ? [*To his* Men—*goes apart with them.*

FISHERMAN.

Rolf, what fish did swallow Jonah ?

ROLF.

A whale!

FISHERMAN.

Then a whale to a whelk we have swallowed the King of England. I saw him over there. Look thee, Rolf, when I was down in the fever, *she* was down with the hunger, and thou didst stand by her and give her thy crabs, and set her up again, till now, by the patient Saints, she's as crabb'd as ever.

ROLF.

And I'll give her my crabs again, when thou art down again.

FISHERMAN.

I thank thee, Rolf. Run thou to Count Guy; he is hard at hand. Tell him what hath crept into our creel, and he will fee thee as freely as he will wrench this outlander's ransom out of him—and why not? for what right had he to get himself wrecked on another man's land?

ROLF.

Thou art the human-heartedest, Christian-charitiest of all crab-catchers! Share and share alike! [*Exit.*

HAROLD (*to* Fisherman).

Fellow, dost thou catch crabs?

FISHERMAN.

As few as I may in a wind, and less than I would in a calm. Ay!

HAROLD.

I have a mind that thou shalt catch no more.

FISHERMAN.

How?

HAROLD.

I have a mind to brain thee with mine axe.

FISHERMAN.

Ay, do, do, and our great Count-crab will make his nippers meet in thine heart; he'll sweat it out of thee, he'll sweat it out of thee. Look, he's here! He'll speak for himself! Hold thine own, if thou canst!

Enter GUY, COUNT OF PONTHIEU.

HAROLD.

Guy, Count of Ponthieu!

GUY.

Harold, Earl of Wessex!

HAROLD.

Thy villains with their lying lights have wreck'd us!

GUY.

Art thou not Earl of Wessex?

HAROLD.

In mine earldom
A man may hang gold bracelets on a bush,
And leave them for a year, and coming back
Find them again.

GUY.

Thou art a mighty man
In thine own earldom!

HAROLD.

Were such murderous liars
In Wessex—if I caught them, they should hang
Cliff-gibbeted for sea-marks; our sea-mew
Winging their only wail!

GUY.

Ay, but my men

Hold that the shipwreckt are accursed of God ;—
What hinders me to hold with mine own men ?

HAROLD.

The Christian manhood of the man who reigns !

GUY.

Ay, rave thy worst, but in our oubliettes
Thou shalt or rot or ransom. Hale him hence !
[*To one of his* Attendants.
Fly thou to William ; tell him we have Harold.

SCENE II.—BAYEUX. PALACE.

COUNT WILLIAM *and* WILLIAM MALET.

WILLIAM.

We hold our Saxon woodcock in the springe,
But he begins to flutter. As I think
He was thine host in England when I went
To visit Edward.

MALET.

Yea, and there, my lord,

To make allowance for their rougher fashions,
I found him all a noble host should be.

WILLIAM.

Thou art his friend: thou know'st my claim on England
Thro' Edward's promise: we have him in the toils.
And it were well, if thou shouldst let him feel,
How dense a fold of danger nets him round,
So that he bristle himself against my will.

MALET.

What would I do, my lord, if I were you?

WILLIAM.

What wouldst thou do?

MALET.

My lord, he is thy guest.

WILLIAM.

Nay, by the splendour of God, no guest of mine.
He came not to see me, had past me by
To hunt and hawk elsewhere, save for the fate
Which hunted *him* when that un-Saxon blast,
And bolts of thunder moulded in high heaven
To serve the Norman purpose, drave and crack'd

His boat on Ponthieu beach ; where our friend Guy
Had wrung his ransom from him by the rack,
But that I stept between and purchased him,
Translating his captivity from Guy
To mine own hearth at Bayeux, where he sits
My ransom'd prisoner.

MALET.

Well, if not with gold,
With golden deeds and iron strokes that brought
Thy war with Brittany to a goodlier close
Than else had been, he paid his ransom back.

WILLIAM.

So that henceforth they are not like to league
With Harold against *me*.

MALET.

A marvel, how
He from the liquid sands of Coesnon
Haled thy shore-swallow'd, armour'd Normans up
To fight for thee again!

WILLIAM.

Perchance against
Their saver, save thou save him from himself.

MALET.

But I should let him home again, my lord.

WILLIAM.

Simple! let fly the bird within the hand,
To catch the bird again within the bush!
No.
Smooth thou my way, before he clash with me;
I want his voice in England for the crown,
I want thy voice with him to bring him round;
And being brave he must be subtly cow'd,
And being truthful wrought upon to swear
Vows that he dare not break. England our own
Thro' Harold's help, he shall be my dear friend
As well as thine, and thou thyself shalt have
Large lordship there of lands and territory.

MALET.

I knew thy purpose; he and Wulfnoth never
Have met, except in public; shall they meet
In private? I have often talk'd with Wulfnoth,
And stuff'd the boy with fears that these may act
On Harold when they meet.

WILLIAM.

Then let them meet!

MALET.

I can but love this noble, honest, Harold.

WILLIAM.

Love him! why not? thine is a loving office,
I have commission'd thee to save the man:
Help the good ship, showing the sunken rock,
Or he is wreckt for ever.

Enter WILLIAM RUFUS.

WILLIAM RUFUS.

Father.

WILLIAM.

Well, boy.

WILLIAM RUFUS.

They have taken away the toy thou gavest me,
The Norman knight.

WILLIAM.

Why, boy?

WILLIAM RUFUS.

Because I broke
The horse's leg—it was mine own to break;
I like to have my toys, and break them too.

WILLIAM.

Well, thou shalt have another Norman knight!

WILLIAM RUFUS.

And may I break his legs?

WILLIAM.

Yea,—get thee gone!

WILLIAM RUFUS.

I'll tell them I have had my way with thee. [*Exit.*

MALET.

I never knew thee check thy will for ought
Save for the prattling of thy little ones.

WILLIAM.

Who shall be kings of England. I am heir
Of England by the promise of her king.

MALET.

But there the great Assembly choose their king,
The choice of England is the voice of England.

WILLIAM.

I will be king of England by the laws,
The choice, and voice of England.

MALET.

Can that be?

WILLIAM.

The voice of any people is the sword
That guards them, or the sword that beats them down.
Here comes the would-be what I will be . . . kinglike . . .
Tho' scarce at ease; for, save our meshes break,
More kinglike he than like to prove a king.

(*Enter* HAROLD, *musing, with his eyes on the ground.*)

He sees me not—and yet he dreams of me.
Earl, wilt thou fly my falcons this fair day?
They are of the best, strong-wing'd against the wind.

HAROLD (*looking up suddenly, having caught but the last word*).

Which way does it blow?

WILLIAM.

Blowing for England, ha?
Not yet. Thou hast not learnt thy quarters here.
The winds so cross and jostle among these towers.

HAROLD.

Count of the Normans, thou hast ransom'd us,
Maintain'd, and entertain'd us royally!

WILLIAM.

And thou for us hast fought as loyally,
Which binds us friendship-fast for ever!

HAROLD.

Good!

But lest we turn the scale of courtesy
By too much pressure on it, I would fain,
Since thou hast promised Wulfnoth home with us,
Be home again with Wulfnoth.

WILLIAM.

Stay—as yet
Thou hast but seen how Norman hands can strike,
But walk'd our Norman field, scarce touch'd or tasted
The splendours of our Court.

HAROLD.

I am in no mood:
I should be as the shadow of a cloud
Crossing your light.

WILLIAM.

Nay, rest a week or two,
And we will fill thee full of Norman sun,

And send thee back among thine island mists
With laughter.

HAROLD.

Count, I thank thee, but had rather
Breathe the free wind from off our Saxon downs,
Tho' charged with all the wet of all the west.

WILLIAM.

Why if thou wilt, so let it be—thou shalt.
That were a graceless hospitality
To chain the free guest to the banquet-board;
To-morrow we will ride with thee to Harfleur,
And see thee shipt, and pray in thy behalf
For happier homeward winds than that which crack'd
Thy bark at Ponthieu,—yet to us, in faith,
A happy one—whereby we came to know
Thy valour and thy value, noble earl.
Ay, and perchance a happy one for thee,
Provided—I will go with thee to-morrow—
Nay—but there be conditions, easy ones,
So thou, fair friend, will take them easily.

Enter Page.

PAGE.

My lord, there is a post from over seas
With news for thee. [*Exit* Page.

WILLIAM.

Come, Malet, let us hear!

[*Exeunt* COUNT WILLIAM *and* MALET.

HAROLD.

Conditions? What conditions? pay him back
His ransom? 'easy'—that were easy—nay—
No money-lover he! What said the King?
'I pray you do not go to Normandy.'
And fate hath blown me hither, bound me too
With bitter obligation to the Count—
Have I not fought it out? What did he mean?
There lodged a gleaming grimness in his eyes,
Gave his shorn smile the lie. The walls oppress me,
And yon huge keep that hinders half the heaven.
Free air! free field!

[*Moves to go out. A* Man-at-arms *follows him.*

HAROLD (*to the* Man-at-arms).

I need thee not. Why dost thou follow me?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

I have the Count's commands to follow thee.

HAROLD.

What then? Am I in danger in this court?

MAN-AT-ARMS.

I cannot tell. I have the Count's commands.

HAROLD.

Stand out of earshot then, and keep me still
In eyeshot.

MAN-AT-ARMS.

Yea, lord Harold. [*Withdraws.*

HAROLD.

And arm'd men
Ever keep watch beside my chamber door,
And if I walk within the lonely wood,
There is an arm'd man ever glides behind!

(*Enter* MALET.)

Why am I follow'd, haunted, harass'd, watch'd?
See yonder! [*Pointing to the* Man-at-arms.

MALET.

'Tis the good Count's care for thee!
The Normans love thee not, nor thou the Normans,
Or—so they deem.

HAROLD.

But wherefore is the wind,

Which way soever the vane-arrow swing,
Not ever fair for England? Why but now
He said (thou heardst him) that I must not hence
Save on conditions.

MALET.

So in truth he said.

HAROLD.

Malet, thy mother was an Englishwoman;
There somewhere beats an English pulse in thee!

MALET.

Well—for my mother's sake I love your England,
But for my father I love Normandy.

HAROLD.

Speak for thy mother's sake, and tell me true.

MALET.

Then for my mother's sake, and England's sake
That suffers in the daily want of thee,
Obey the Count's conditions, my good friend.

HAROLD.

How, Malet, if they be not honourable!

MALET.

Seem to obey them.

HAROLD.

Better die than lie!

MALET.

Choose therefore whether thou wilt have thy conscience
White as a maiden's hand, or whether England
Be shatter'd into fragments.

HAROLD.

News from England?

MALET.

Morcar and Edwin have stirr'd up the Thanes
Against thy brother Tostig's governance;
And all the North of Humber is one storm.

HAROLD.

I should be there, Malet, I should be there!

MALET.

And Tostig in his own hall on suspicion
Hath massacred the Thane that was his guest,
Gamel, the son of Orm: and there be more
As villainously slain.

HAROLD.

The wolf! the beast!
Ill news for guests, ha, Malet! More? What more?
What do they say? did Edward know of this?

MALET.

They say, his wife was knowing and abetting.

HAROLD.

They say, his wife!—To marry and have no husband
Makes the wife fool. My God, I should be there.
I'll hack my way to the sea.

MALET.

Thou canst not, Harold;
Our Duke is all between thee and the sea,
Our Duke is all about thee like a God;
All passes block'd. Obey him, speak him fair,
For he is only debonair to those
That follow where he leads, but stark as death
To those that cross him.—Look thou, here is Wulfnoth!
I leave thee to thy talk with him alone;
How wan, poor lad! how sick and sad for home!

[*Exit* MALET.

HAROLD (*muttering*).

Go not to Normandy—go not to Normandy!

(*Enter* WULFNOTH.)

Poor brother! still a hostage!

WULFNOTH.

Yea, and I
Shall see the dewy kiss of dawn no more
Make blush the maiden-white of our tall cliffs,
Nor mark the sea-bird rouse himself and hover
Above the windy ripple, and fill the sky
With free sea-laughter—never—save indeed
Thou canst make yield this iron-mooded Duke
To let me go.

HAROLD.

Why, brother, so he will;
But on conditions. Canst thou guess at them?

WULFNOTH.

Draw nearer,—I was in the corridor,
I saw him coming with his brother Odo
The Bayeux bishop, and I hid myself.

HAROLD.

They did thee wrong who made thee hostage; thou
Wast ever fearful.

WULFNOTH.

And he spoke—I heard him—
'This Harold is not of the royal blood,
Can have no right to the crown,' and Odo said,
'Thine is the right, for thine the might; he is here,
And yonder is thy keep.'

HAROLD.

No, Wulfnoth, no.

WULFNOTH.

And William laugh'd and swore that might was right,
Far as he knew in this poor world of ours—
'Marry, the Saints must go along with us,
And, brother, we will find a way,' said he—
Yea, yea, he would be king of England.

HAROLD.

Never!

WULFNOTH.

Yea, but thou must not this way answer *him*.

HAROLD.

Is it not better still to speak the truth?

WULFNOTH.

Not here, or thou wilt never hence nor I:
For in the racing toward this golden goal
He turns not right or left, but tramples flat
Whatever thwarts him; hast thou never heard
His savagery at Alençon,—the town
Hung out raw hides along their walls, and cried
'Work for the tanner.'

HAROLD.

That had anger'd *me*
Had I been William.

WULFNOTH.

Nay, but he had prisoners,
He tore their eyes out, sliced their hands away,
And flung them streaming o'er the battlements
Upon the heads of those who walk'd within—
O speak him fair, Harold, for thine own sake.

HAROLD.

Your Welshman says, 'The Truth against the World,'
Much more the truth against myself.

WULFNOTH.

Thyself?
But for my sake, oh brother! oh! for my sake!

HAROLD.

Poor Wulfnoth! do they not entreat thee well?

WULFNOTH.

I see the blackness of my dungeon loom
Across their lamps of revel, and beyond
The merriest murmurs of their banquet clank
The shackles that will bind me to the wall.

HAROLD.

Too fearful still!

WULFNOTH.

Oh no, no—speak him fair!
Call it to temporize; and not to lie;
Harold, I do not counsel thee to lie.
The man that hath to foil a murderous aim
May, surely, play with words.

HAROLD.

Words are the man.
Not ev'n for thy sake, brother, would I lie.

WULFNOTH.

Then for thine Edith?

HAROLD.

There thou prickst me deep.

WULFNOTH.

And for our Mother England?

HAROLD.

Deeper still.

WULFNOTH.

And deeper still the deep-down oubliette,
Down thirty feet below the smiling day—
In blackness—dogs' food thrown upon thy head.
And over thee the suns arise and set,
And the lark sings, the sweet stars come and go,
And men are at their markets, in their fields,
And woo their loves and have forgotten thee;
And thou art upright in thy living grave,
Where there is barely room to shift thy side,
And all thine England hath forgotten thee;
And he our lazy-pious Norman King,
With all his Normans round him once again,
Counts his old beads, and hath forgotten thee.

HAROLD.

Thou art of my blood, and so methinks, my boy,
Thy fears infect me beyond reason. Peace!

WULFNOTH.

And then our fiery Tostig, while thy hands
Are palsied here, if his Northumbrians rise
And hurl him from them,—I have heard the Normans
Count upon this confusion—may he not make
A league with William, so to bring him back?

HAROLD.

That lies within the shadow of the chance.

WULFNOTH.

And like a river in flood thro' a burst dam
Descends the ruthless Norman—our good King
Kneels mumbling some old bone—our helpless folk
Are wash'd away, wailing, in their own blood—

HAROLD.

Wailing! not warring? Boy, thou hast forgotten
That thou art English.

WULFNOTH.

Then our modest women—
I know the Norman license—thine own Edith—

HAROLD.

No more! I will not hear thee—William comes.

WULFNOTH.

I dare not well be seen in talk with thee.
Make thou not mention that I spake with thee.
[*Moves away to the back of the stage.*

Enter WILLIAM, MALET, *and* Officer.

OFFICER.

We have the man that rail'd against thy birth.

WILLIAM.

Tear out his tongue.

OFFICER.

He shall not rail again
He said that he should see confusion fall
On thee and on thine house.

WILLIAM.

Tear out his eyes,
And plunge him into prison.

OFFICER.

It shall be done.
[*Exit* Officer.

WILLIAM.

Look not amazed, fair earl! Better leave undone
Than do by halves—tongueless and eyeless, prison'd—

HAROLD.

Better methinks have slain the man at once!

WILLIAM.

We have respect for man's immortal soul,
We seldom take man's life, except in war;
It frights the traitor more to maim and blind.

HAROLD.

In mine own land I should have scorn'd the man,
Or lash'd his rascal back, and let him go.

WILLIAM.

And let him go? To slander thee again!
Yet in thine own land in thy father's day
They blinded my young kinsman, Alfred—ay,
Some said it was thy father's deed.

HAROLD.

They lied.

WILLIAM.

But thou and he—whom at thy word, for thou
Art known a speaker of the truth, I free
From this foul charge—

HAROLD.

Nay, nay, he freed himself
By oath and compurgation from the charge.
The king, the lords, the people clear'd him of it.

WILLIAM.

But thou and he drove our good Normans out
From England, and this rankles in us yet.
Archbishop Robert hardly scaped with life.

HAROLD.

Archbishop Robert! Robert the Archbishop!
Robert of Jumiéges, he that—

MALET.

Quiet! quiet!

HAROLD.

Count! if there sat within thy Norman chair
A ruler all for England—one who fill'd
All offices, all bishopricks with English—
We could not move from Dover to the Humber
Saving thro' Norman bishopricks—I say
Ye would applaud that Norman who should drive
The stranger to the fiends!

WILLIAM.

Why, that is reason!
Warrior thou art, and mighty wise withal!
Ay, ay, but many among our Norman lords
Hate thee for this, and press upon me—saying
God and the sea have given thee to our hands—
To plunge thee into life-long prison here:—
Yet I hold out against them, as I may,
Yea—would hold out, yea, tho' they should revolt—
For thou hast done the battle in my cause;
I am thy fastest friend in Normandy.

HAROLD.

I am doubly bound to thee . . . if this be so.

WILLIAM.

And I would bind thee more, and would myself
Be bounden to thee more.

HAROLD.

Then let me hence
With Wulfnoth to King Edward.

WILLIAM.

So we will.
We hear he hath not long to live.

HAROLD.

It may be.

WILLIAM.

Why then the heir of England, who is he?

HAROLD.

The Atheling is nearest to the throne.

WILLIAM.

But sickly, slight, half-witted and a child,
Will England have him king?

HAROLD.

It may be, no.

WILLIAM.

And hath King Edward not pronounced his heir?

HAROLD.

Not that I know.

WILLIAM.

When he was here in Normandy,
He loved us and we him, because we found him
A Norman of the Normans.

HAROLD.

So did we.

WILLIAM.

A gentle, gracious, pure and saintly man!
And grateful to the hand that shielded him,
He promised that if ever he were king
In England, he would give his kingly voice
To me as his successor. Knowest thou this?

HAROLD.

I learn it now.

WILLIAM.

Thou knowest I am his cousin,
And that my wife descends from Alfred?

HAROLD.

Ay.

WILLIAM.

Who hath a better claim then to the crown
So that ye will not crown the Atheling?

HAROLD.

None that I know . . . if that but hung upon
King Edward's will.

WILLIAM.

Wilt *thou* uphold my claim?

MALET (*aside to* HAROLD).

Be careful of thine answer, my good friend.

WULFNOTH (*aside to* HAROLD).

Oh! Harold, for my sake and for thine own!

HAROLD.

Ay . . . if the king have not revoked his promise.

WILLIAM.

But hath he done it then?

HAROLD.

Not that I know.

WILLIAM.

Good, good, and thou wilt help me to the crown.

HAROLD.

Ay . . . if the Witan will consent to this.

WILLIAM.

Thou art the mightiest voice in England, man,
Thy voice will lead the Witan—shall I have it?

WULFNOTH (*aside to* HAROLD).

Oh! Harold, if thou love thine Edith, ay.

HAROLD.

Ay, if—

MALET (*aside to* HAROLD).

Thine 'ifs' will sear thine eyes out—ay.

WILLIAM.

I ask thee, wilt thou help me to the crown?
And I will make thee my great Earl of Earls,
Foremost in England and in Normandy;
Thou shalt be verily king—all but the name—
For I shall most sojourn in Normandy;
And thou be my vice-king in England. Speak.

WULFNOTH (*aside to* HAROLD).

Ay, brother—for the sake of England—ay.

HAROLD.

My lord—

MALET (*aside to* HAROLD).

Take heed now.

HAROLD.

Ay.

WILLIAM.

I am content,
For thou art truthful, and thy word thy bond.
To-morrow will we ride with thee to Harfleur.

[*Exit* WILLIAM.

MALET.

Harold, I am thy friend, one life with thee,
And even as I should bless thee saving mine,
I thank thee now for having saved thyself.

[*Exit* MALET.

HAROLD.

For having lost myself to save myself,
Said 'ay' when I meant 'no,' lied like a lad
That dreads the pendent scourge, said 'ay' for 'no'!
Ay! No!—he hath not bound me by an oath—
Is 'ay' an oath? is 'ay' strong as an oath?
Or is it the same sin to break my word
As break mine oath? He call'd my word my bond!
He is a liar who knows I am a liar,
And makes believe that he believes my word—
The crime be on his head—not bounden—no.

[*Suddenly doors are flung open, discovering in an inner hall* COUNT WILLIAM *in his state robes, seated upon his throne, between two* Bishops,

ODO OF BAYEUX *being one: in the centre of the hall an ark covered with cloth of gold; and on either side of it the Norman barons.*

Enter a Jailor *before* WILLIAM'S *throne.*

WILLIAM (*to* Jailor).

Knave, hast thou let thy prisoner scape?

JAILOR.

Sir Count,
He had but one foot, he must have hopt away,
Yea, some familiar spirit must have help'd him.

WILLIAM.

Woe knave to thy familiar and to thee!
Give me thy keys. [*They fall clashing.*
Nay let them lie. Stand there and wait my will.
[*The* Jailor *stands aside.*

WILLIAM (*to* HAROLD).

Hast thou such trustless jailors in thy North?

HAROLD.

We have few prisoners in mine earldom there,
So less chance for false keepers.

WILLIAM.

We have heard
Of thy just, mild, and equal governance;
Honour to thee! thou art perfect in all honour!
Thy naked word thy bond! confirm it now
Before our gather'd Norman baronage,
For they will not believe thee—as I believe.

[*Descends from his throne and stands by the ark.*

Let all men here bear witness of our bond!

[*Beckons to* HAROLD *who advances. Enter* MALET *behind him.*

Lay thou thy hand upon this golden pall!
Behold the jewel of St. Pancratius
Woven into the gold. Swear thou on this!

HAROLD.

What should I swear? Why should I swear on this?

WILLIAM (*savagely*).

Swear thou to help me to the crown of England.

MALET (*whispering* HAROLD).

My friend, thou hast gone too far to palter now.

WULFNOTH (*whispering* HAROLD).

Swear thou to-day, to-morrow is thine own.

HAROLD.

I swear to help thee to the Crown of England . . .
According as King Edward promises.

WILLIAM.

Thou must swear absolutely, noble Earl.

MALET (*whispering*).

Delay is death to thee, ruin to England.

WULFNOTH (*whispering*).

Swear, dearest brother, I beseech thee, swear!

HAROLD (*putting his hand on the jewel*).

I swear to help thee to the crown of England.

WILLIAM.

Thanks, truthful Earl; I did not doubt thy word,
But that my barons might believe thy word,
And that the Holy Saints of Normandy
When thou art home in England, with thine own,
Might strengthen thee in keeping of thy word,

I made thee swear.—Show him by whom he hath sworn.

[*The two* Bishops *advance, and raise the cloth of gold. The bodies and bones of Saints are seen lying in the ark.*

The holy bones of all the Canonised
From all the holiest shrines in Normandy!

HAROLD

Horrible! [*They let the cloth fall again.*

WILLIAM.

Ay, for thou hast sworn an oath
Which, if not kept, would make the hard earth rive
To the very Devil's horns, the bright sky cleave
To the very feet of God, and send her hosts
Of injured Saints to scatter sparks of plague
Thro' all your cities, blast your infants, dash
The torch of war among your standing corn,
Dabble your hearths with your own blood.—Enough!
Thou wilt not break it! I, the Count—the King—
Thy friend—am grateful for thine honest oath,
Not coming fiercely like a conqueror, now,
But softly as a bridegroom to his own.
For I shall rule according to your laws,
And make your ever-jarring Earldoms move

To music and in order—Angle, Jute,
Dane, Saxon, Norman, help to build a throne
Out-towering hers of France . . . The wind is fair
For England now . . . To-night we will be merry.
To-morrow will I ride with thee to Harfleur.

[*Exeunt* WILLIAM *and all the Norman barons, &c.*

HAROLD.

To-night we will be merry—and to-morrow—
Juggler and bastard—bastard—he hates that most—
William the tanner's bastard! Would he heard me!
O God, that I were in some wide, waste field
With nothing but my battle-axe and him
To spatter his brains! Why let earth rive, gulf in
These cursed Normans—yea and mine own self.
Cleave heaven, and send thy saints that I may say
Ev'n to their faces, 'If ye side with William
Ye are not noble.' How their pointed fingers
Glared at me! Am I Harold, Harold son
Of our great Godwin? Lo! I touch mine arms,
My limbs—they are not mine—they are a liar's—
I mean to be a liar—I am not bound—
Stigand shall give me absolution for it—
Did the chest move? did it move? I am utter craven!
O Wulfnoth, Wulfnoth, brother, thou hast betray'd me!

WULFNOTH.

Forgive me, brother, I will live here and die.

Enter Page.

PAGE.

My lord! the Duke awaits thee at the banquet.

HAROLD.

Where they eat dead men's flesh, and drink their blood.

PAGE.

My lord—

HAROLD.

I know your Norman cookery is so spiced,
It masks all this.

PAGE.

My lord! thou art white as death

HAROLD.

With looking on the dead. Am I so white?
Thy Duke will seem the darker. Hence, I follow.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—THE KING'S PALACE. LONDON.

KING EDWARD *dying on a couch, and by him standing the* QUEEN, HAROLD, ARCHBISHOP STIGAND, GURTH, LEOFWIN, ARCHBISHOP ALDRED, ALDWYTH, *and* EDITH.

STIGAND.

Sleeping or dying there? If this be death,
Then our great Council wait to crown thee King—
Come hither, I have a power; [*to* HAROLD.
They call me near, for I am close to thee
And England—I, old shrivell'd Stigand, I,
Dry as an old wood-fungus on a dead tree,
I have a power!
See here this little key about my neck!
There lies a treasure buried down in Ely:
If e'er the Norman grow too hard for thee,
Ask me for this at thy most need, son Harold,
At thy most need—not sooner.

HAROLD.

So I will.

STIGAND.

Red gold—a hundred purses—yea, and more!
If thou canst make a wholesome use of these
To chink against the Norman, I do believe
My old crook'd spine would bud out two young wings
To fly to heaven straight with.

HAROLD.

Thank thee, father!
Thou art English, Edward too is English now,
He hath clean repented of his Normanism.

STIGAND.

Ay, as the libertine repents who cannot
Make done undone, when thro' his dying sense
Shrills 'lost thro' thee.' They have built their castles here;
Our priories are Norman; the Norman adder
Hath bitten us; we are poison'd: our dear England
Is demi-Norman. He!—

[*Pointing to* KING EDWARD, *sleeping.*

HAROLD.

I would I were

As holy and as passionless as he!
That I might rest as calmly! Look at him—
The rosy face, and long down-silvering beard,
The brows unwrinkled as a summer mere.—

STIGAND.

A summer mere with sudden wreckful gusts
From a side-gorge. Passionless? How he flamed
When Tostig's anger'd earldom flung him, nay,
He fain had calcined all Northumbria
To one black ash, but that thy patriot passion
Siding with our great Council against Tostig,
Out-passion'd his! Holy? ay, ay, forsooth,
A conscience for his own soul, not his realm;
A twilight conscience lighted thro' a chink;
Thine by the sun; nay, by some sun to be,
When all the world hath learnt to speak the truth,
And lying were self-murder by that state
Which was the exception.

HAROLD.

That sun may God speed!

STIGAND.

Come, Harold, shake the cloud off!

HAROLD.

Can I, father?
Our Tostig parted cursing me and England;
Our sister hates us for his banishment;
He hath gone to kindle Norway against England,
And Wulfnoth is alone in Normandy.
For when I rode with William down to Harfleur,
'Wulfnoth is sick,' he said; 'he cannot follow;'
Then with that friendly-fiendly smile of his,
'We have learnt to love him, let him a little longer
Remain a hostage for the loyalty
Of Godwin's house.' As far as touches Wulfnoth,
I that so prized plain word and naked truth
Have sinn'd against it—all in vain.

LEOFWIN.

Good brother,
By all the truths that ever priest hath preach'd,
Of all the lies that ever men have lied,
Thine is the pardonablest.

HAROLD.

May be so!
I think it so, I think I am a fool
To think it can be otherwise than so.

STIGAND.

Tut, tut, I have absolved thee: dost thou scorn me,
Because I had my Canterbury pallium
From one whom they dispoped?

HAROLD.

No, Stigand, no!

STIGAND.

Is naked truth actable in true life?
I have heard a saying of thy father Godwin,
That, were a man of state nakedly true,
Men would but take him for the craftier liar.

LEOFWIN.

Be men less delicate than the Devil himself?
I thought that naked Truth would shame the Devil,
The Devil is so modest.

GURTH.

He never said it!

LEOFWIN.

Be thou not stupid-honest, brother Gurth!

HAROLD.

Better to be a liar's dog, and hold

My master honest, than believe that lying
And ruling men are fatal twins that cannot
Move one without the other. Edward wakes!—
Dazed—he hath seen a vision.

EDWARD.

The green tree!
Then a great Angel past along the highest
Crying 'the doom of England,' and at once
He stood beside me, in his grasp a sword
Of lightnings, wherewithal he cleft the tree
From off the bearing trunk, and hurl'd it from him
Three fields away, and then he dash'd and drench'd,
He dyed, he soak'd the trunk with human blood,
And brought the sunder'd tree again, and set it
Straight on the trunk, that thus baptized in blood
Grew ever high and higher, beyond my seeing,
And shot out sidelong boughs across the deep
That dropt themselves, and rooted in far isles
Beyond my seeing: and the great Angel rose
And past again along the highest crying
'The doom of England!'—Tostig, raise my head!

[*Falls back senseless.*

HAROLD (*raising him*).

Let Harold serve for Tostig!

QUEEN.

Harold served
Tostig so ill, he cannot serve for Tostig!
Ay, raise his head, for thou hast laid it low!
The sickness of our saintly king, for whom
My prayers go up as fast as my tears fall,
I well believe, hath mainly drawn itself
From lack of Tostig—thou hast banish'd him.

HAROLD.

Nay—but the Council, and the king himself!

QUEEN.

Thou hatest him, hatest him.

HAROLD (*coldly*).

Ay—Stigand, unriddle
This vision, canst thou?

STIGAND.

Dotage!

EDWARD (*starting up*).

It is finish'd.
I have built the Lord a house—the Lord hath dwelt
In darkness. I have built the Lord a house—

Palms, flowers, pomegranates, golden cherubim
With twenty-cubit wings from wall to wall—
I have built the Lord a house—sing, Asaph! clash
The cymbal, Heman! blow the trumpet, priest!
Fall, cloud, and fill the house—lo! my two pillars,
Jachin and Boaz!— [*Seeing* HAROLD *and* GURTH.
Harold, Gurth,—where am I?
Where is the charter of our Westminster?

STIGAND.

It lies beside thee, king, upon thy bed.

EDWARD.

Sign, sign at once—take, sign it, Stigand, Aldred!
Sign it, my good son Harold, Gurth, and Leofwin,
Sign it, my queen!

ALL.

We have sign'd it.

EDWARD.

It is finish'd!
The kingliest Abbey in all Christian lands,
The lordliest, loftiest minster ever built
To Holy Peter in our English isle!
Let me be buried there, and all our kings,

And all our just and wise and holy men
That shall be born hereafter. It is finish'd!
Hast thou had absolution for thine oath? [*To* HAROLD.

HAROLD.

Stigand hath given me absolution for it.

EDWARD.

Stigand is not canonical enough
To save thee from the wrath of Norman Saints.

STIGAND.

Norman enough! Be there no Saints of England
To help us from their brethren yonder?

EDWARD.

Prelate,
The Saints are one, but those of Normanland
Are mightier than our own. Ask it of Aldred.
[*To* HAROLD.

ALDRED.

It shall be granted him, my king; for he
Who vows a vow to strangle his own mother
Is guiltier keeping this, than breaking it.

EDWARD.

O friends, I shall not overlive the day.

STIGAND.

Why then the throne is empty. Who inherits?
For tho' we be not bound by the king's voice
In making of a king, yet the king's voice
Is much toward his making. Who inherits?
Edgar the Atheling?

EDWARD.

No, no, but Harold.
I love him: he hath served me: none but he
Can rule all England. Yet the curse is on him
For swearing falsely by those blessed bones;
He did not mean to keep his vow.

HAROLD.

Not mean
To make our England Norman.

EDWARD.

There spake Godwin,
Who hated all the Normans; but their Saints
Have heard thee, Harold.

EDITH.

Oh! my lord, my king!
He knew not whom he sware by.

EDWARD.

Yea, I know
He knew not, but those heavenly ears have heard,
Their curse is on him; wilt thou bring another,
Edith, upon his head?

EDITH.

No, no, not I.

EDWARD.

Why then, thou must not wed him.

HAROLD.

Wherefore, wherefore?

EDWARD.

O son, when thou didst tell me of thine oath,
I sorrow'd for my random promise given
To yon fox-lion. I did not dream then
I should be king.—My son, the Saints are virgins;
They love the white rose of virginity,
The cold, white lily blowing in her cell:
I have been myself a virgin; and I sware

To consecrate my virgin here to heaven—
The silent, cloister'd, solitary life,
A life of life-long prayer against the curse
That lies on thee and England.

HAROLD.

No, no, no.

EDWARD.

Treble denial of the tongue of flesh,
Like Peter's when he fell, and thou wilt have
To wail for it like Peter. O my son!
Are all oaths to be broken then, all promises
Made in our agony for help from heaven?
Son, there is one who loves thee: and a wife,
What matters who, so she be serviceable
In all obedience, as mine own hath been:
God bless thee, wedded daughter.

[*Laying his hand on the* QUEEN'S *head.*

QUEEN.

Bless thou too
That brother whom I love beyond the rest,
My banish'd Tostig.

EDWARD.

All the sweet Saints bless him!

Spare and forbear him, Harold, if he comes !
And let him pass unscathed ; he loves me, Harold !
Be kindly to the Normans left among us,
Who follow'd me for love ! and dear son, swear
When thou art king, to see my solemn vow
Accomplish'd !

HAROLD.

Nay, dear lord, for I have sworn
Not to swear falsely twice.

EDWARD.

Thou wilt not swear ?

HAROLD.

I cannot.

EDWARD.

Then on thee remains the curse,
Harold, if thou embrace her : and on thee,
Edith, if thou abide it,—

[*The* KING *swoons;* EDITH *falls and kneels by the couch.*

STIGAND.

He hath swoon'd !
Death ? . . . no, as yet a breath.

HAROLD.

Look up! look up!

Edith!

ALDRED.

Confuse her not; she hath begun
Her life-long prayer for thee.

ALDWYTH.

O noble Harold,

I would thou couldst have sworn.

HAROLD.

For thine own pleasure?

ALDWYTH.

No, but to please our dying king, and those
Who make thy good their own—all England, Earl.

ALDRED.

I would thou couldst have sworn. Our holy king
Hath given his virgin lamb to Holy Church
To save thee from the curse.

HAROLD.

Alas! poor man,

His promise brought it on me.

ALDRED.

O good son!
That knowledge made him all the carefuller
To find a means whereby the curse might glance
From thee and England.

HAROLD.

Father, we so loved—

ALDRED.

The more the love, the mightier is the prayer;
The more the love, the more acceptable
The sacrifice of both your loves to heaven,
No sacrifice to heaven, no help from heaven;
That runs thro' all the faiths of all the world.
And sacrifice there must be, for the king
Is holy, and hath talk'd with God, and seen
A shadowing horror; there are signs in heaven—

HAROLD.

Your comet came and went.

ALDRED.

And signs on earth!
Knowest thou Senlac hill?

HAROLD.

I know all Sussex;
A good entrenchment for a perilous hour!

ALDRED.

Pray God that come not suddenly! There is one
Who passing by that hill three nights ago—
He shook so that he scarce could out with it—
Heard, heard—

HAROLD.

The wind in his hair?

ALDRED.

A ghostly horn
Blowing continually, and faint battle-hymns,
And cries, and clashes, and the groans of men;
And dreadful shadows strove upon the hill,
And dreadful lights crept up from out the marsh—
Corpse-candles gliding over nameless graves—

HAROLD.

At Senlac?

ALDRED.

Senlac.

EDWARD (*waking*).

Senlac! Sanguelac,
The Lake of Blood!

STIGAND.

This lightning before death
Plays on the word,—and Normanizes too!

HAROLD.

Hush, father, hush!

EDWARD.

Thou uncanonical fool,
Wilt *thou* play with the thunder? North and South
Thunder together, showers of blood are blown
Before a never-ending blast, and hiss
Against the blaze they cannot quench—a lake,
A sea of blood—we are drown'd in blood—for God
Has fill'd the quiver, and Death has drawn the bow—
Sanguelac! Sanguelac! the arrow! the arrow! [*Dies.*

STIGAND.

It is the arrow of death in his own heart—
And our great Council wait to crown thee King.

SCENE II.—IN THE GARDEN. THE KING'S HOUSE NEAR LONDON.

EDITH.

Crown'd, crown'd and lost, crown'd King—and lost to me!

(*Singing.*)

Two young lovers in winter weather,
None to guide them,
Walk'd at night on the misty heather;
Night, as black as a raven's feather;
Both were lost and found together,
None beside them.

That is the burthen of it—lost and found
Together in the cruel river Swale
A hundred years ago; and there's another,

Lost, lost, the light of day,

To which the lover answers lovingly

"I am beside thee."
Lost, lost, we have lost the way.
"Love, I will guide thee."

Whither, O whither? into the river,
Where we two may be lost together,
And lost for ever? "Oh! never, oh! never,
Tho' we be lost and be found together."

Some think they loved within the pale forbidden
By Holy Church: but who shall say? the truth
Was lost in that fierce North, where *they* were lost
Where all good things are lost, where Tostig lost
The good hearts of his people. It is Harold!

(*Enter* HAROLD.)

Harold the King!

HAROLD.

Call me not King, but Harold.

EDITH.

Nay, thou art King!

HAROLD.

Thine, thine, or King or churl!
My girl, thou hast been weeping: turn not thou
Thy face away, but rather let me be
King of the moment to thee, and command
That kiss my due when subject, which will make

My kingship kinglier to me than to reign
King of the world without it.

EDITH.

Ask mè not,
Lest I should yield it, and the second curse
Descend upon thine head, and thou be only
King of the moment over England.

HAROLD.

Edith,
Tho' somewhat less a king to my true self
Than ere they crown'd me one, for I have lost
Somewhat of upright stature thro' mine oath,
Yet thee I would not lose, and sell not thou
Our living passion for a dead man's dream;
Stigand believed he knew not what he spake.
Oh God! I cannot help it, but at times
They seem to me too narrow, all the faiths
Of this grown world of ours, whose baby eye
Saw them sufficient. Fool and wise, I fear
This curse, and scorn it. But a little light!—
And on it falls the shadow of the priest;
Heaven yield us more! for better, Woden, all
Our cancell'd warrior-gods, our grim Walhalla,
Eternal war, than that the Saints at peace

The Holiest of our Holiest one should be
This William's fellow-tricksters ;—better die
Than credit this, for death is death, or else
Lifts us beyond the lie. Kiss me—thou art not
A holy sister yet, my girl, to fear
There might be more than brother in my kiss,
And more than sister in thine own.

EDITH.

I dare not.

HAROLD.

Scared by the church—'Love for a whole life long'
When was that sung ?

EDITH.

Here to the nightingales.

HAROLD.

Their anthems of no church, how sweet they are !
Nor kingly priest, nor priestly king to cross
Their billings ere they nest.

EDITH.

They are but of spring,
They fly the winter change—not so with us—
No wings to come and go.

HAROLD.

But wing'd souls flying
Beyond all change and in the eternal distance
To settle on the Truth.

EDITH.

They are not so true,
They change their mates.

HAROLD.

Do they? I did not know it.

EDITH.

They say thou art to wed the Lady Aldwyth.

HAROLD.

They say, they say.

EDITH.

If this be politic,
And well for thee and England—and for her—
Care not for me who love thee.

GURTH (*calling*).

Harold, Harold!

HAROLD.

The voice of Gurth! (*Enter* GURTH) Good even, my good brother!

GURTH.

Good even, gentle Edith.

EDITH.

Good even, Gurth.

GURTH.

Ill news hath come! Our hapless brother, Tostig,—
He, and the giant King of Norway, Harold
Hardrada—Scotland, Ireland, Iceland, Orkney,
Are landed North of Humber, and in a field
So packt with carnage that the dykes and brooks
Were bridged and damm'd with dead, have overthrown
Morcar and Edwin.

HAROLD.

Well then, we must fight.
How blows the wind?

GURTH.

Against St. Valery
And William.

HAROLD.

Well then, we will to the North.

GURTH.

Ay, but worse news : this William sent to Rome,
Swearing thou swarest falsely by his Saints :
The Pope and that Archdeacon Hildebrand
His master, heard him, and have sent him back
A holy gonfanon, and a blessed hair
Of Peter, and all France, all Burgundy,
Poitou, all Christendom is raised against thee ;
He hath cursed thee, and all those who fight for thee,
And given thy realm of England to the bastard.

HAROLD.

Ha ! ha !

EDITH.

Oh ! laugh not ! . . . Strange and ghastly in the gloom
And shadowing of this double thunder-cloud
That lours on England—laughter !

HAROLD.

No, not strange !
This was old human laughter in old Rome
Before a Pope was born, when that which reign'd

Call'd itself God.—A kindly rendering
Of 'Render unto Cæsar.' . . . The Good Shepherd!
Take this, and render that.

GURTH.

They have taken York.

HAROLD.

The Lord was God and came as man—the Pope
Is man and comes as God.—York taken?

GURTH.

Yea,
Tostig hath taken York!

HAROLD.

To York then. Edith,
Hadst thou been braver, I had better braved
All—but I love thee and thou me—and that
Remains beyond all chances and all churches,
And that thou knowest.

EDITH.

Ay, but take back thy ring.
It burns my hand—a curse to thee and me.
I dare not wear it.

[*Proffers* HAROLD *the ring, which he takes.*

HAROLD.

But I dare. God with thee!

[*Exeunt* HAROLD *and* GURTH.

EDITH.

The King hath cursed him, if he marry me;
The Pope hath cursed him, marry me or no!
God help me! I know nothing—can but pray
For Harold—pray, pray, pray—no help but prayer,
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world,
And touches Him that made it.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—IN NORTHUMBRIA.

ARCHBISHOP ALDRED, MORCAR, EDWIN, *and* Forces. *Enter* HAROLD. *The standard of the golden Dragon of Wessex preceding him.*

HAROLD.

What are thy people sullen from defeat?
Our Wessex dragon flies beyond the Humber,
No voice to greet it.

EDWIN.

Let not our great king
Believe us sullen—only shamed to the quick
Before the king—as having been so bruised
By Harold, king of Norway; but our help
Is Harold, king of England. Pardon us, thou!
Our silence is our reverence for the king!

HAROLD.

Earl of the Mercians! if the truth be gall,

Cram me not thou with honey, when our good hive
Needs every sting to save it.

VOICES.

Aldwyth! Aldwyth!

HAROLD.

Why cry thy people on thy sister's name?

MORCAR.

She hath won upon our people thro' her beauty,
And pleasantness among them.

VOICES.

Aldwyth, Aldwyth!

HAROLD.

They shout as they would have her for a queen.

MORCAR.

She hath followed with our host, and suffer'd all.

HAROLD.

What would ye, men?

VOICE.

Our old Northumbrian crown,
And kings of our own choosing.

HAROLD.

Your old crown
Were little help without our Saxon carles
Against Hardrada.

VOICE.

Little! we are Danes,
Who conquer'd what we walk on, our own field.

HAROLD.

They have been plotting here! [*Aside.*

VOICE.

He calls us little!

HAROLD.

The kingdoms of this world began with little,
A hill, a fort, a city—that reach'd a hand
Down to the field beneath it, 'Be thou mine,'
Then to the next, 'Thou also—' if the field
Cried out 'I am mine own;' another hill
Or fort, or city, took it, and the first
Fell, and the next became an Empire.

VOICE.

Yet
Thou art but a West Saxon: *we* are Danes!

HAROLD.

My mother is a Dane, and I am English;
There is a pleasant fable in old books,
Ye take a stick, and break it; bind a score
All in one faggot, snap it over knee,
Ye cannot.

VOICE.

Hear King Harold! he says true!

HAROLD.

Would ye be Norsemen?

VOICES.

No!

HAROLD.

Or Norman?

VOICES.

No!

HAROLD.

Snap not the faggot-band then.

VOICE.

That is true!

VOICE.

Ay, but thou art not kingly, only grandson
To Wulfnoth, a poor cow-herd.

HAROLD.

This old Wulfnoth
Would take me on his knees and tell me tales
Of Alfred and of Athelstan the Great
Who drove you Danes; and yet he held that Dane,
Jute, Angle, Saxon, were or should be all
One England, for this cow-herd, like my father,
Who shook the Norman scoundrels off the throne,
Had in him kingly thoughts—a king of men,
Not made but born, like the great king of all,
A light among the oxen.

VOICE.

That is true!

VOICE.

Ay, and I love him now, for mine own father
Was great, and cobbled.

VOICE.

Thou art Tostig's brother,
Who wastes the land.

HAROLD.

This brother comes to save
Your land from waste; I saved it once before,
For when your people banish'd Tostig hence,
And Edward would have sent a host against you,
Then I, who loved my brother, bad the king
Who doted on him, sanction your decree
Of Tostig's banishment, and choice of Morcar,
To help the realm from scattering.

VOICE.

King! thy brother,
If one may dare to speak the truth, was wrong'd,
Wild was he, born so: but the plots against him
Had madden'd tamer men.

MORCAR.

Thou art one of those
Who brake into Lord Tostig's treasure-house
And slew two hundred of his following,
And now, when Tostig hath come back with power,
Are frighted back to Tostig.

OLD THANE.

Ugh! Plots and feuds!
This is my ninetieth birthday. Can ye not

Be brethren? Godwin still at feud with Alfgar,
And Alfgar hates King Harold. Plots and feuds!
This is my ninetieth birthday!

HAROLD.

Old man, Harold
Hates nothing; not *his* fault, if our two houses
Be less than brothers.

VOICES.

Aldwyth, Harold, Aldwyth!

HAROLD.

Again! Morcar! Edwin! What do they mean?

EDWIN.

So the good king would deign to lend an ear
Not overscornful, we might chance—perchance—
To guess their meaning.

MORCAR.

Thine own meaning, Harold,
To make all England one, to close all feuds,
Mixing our bloods, that thence a king may rise
Half-Godwin and half-Alfgar, one to rule
All England beyond question, beyond quarrel.

HAROLD.

Who sow'd this fancy here among the people?

MORCAR.

Who knows what sows itself among the people?
A goodly flower at times.

HAROLD.

The Queen of Wales?
Why, Morcar, it is all but duty in her
To hate me; I have heard she hates me.

MORCAR.

No!
For I can swear to that, but cannot swear
That these will follow thee against the Norsemen,
If thou deny them this.

HAROLD.

Morcar and Edwin,
When will ye cease to plot against my house?

EDWIN.

The king can scarcely dream that we, who know
His prowess in the mountains of the West,
Should care to plot against him in the North.

MORCAR.

Who dares arraign us, king, of such a plot?

HAROLD.

Ye heard one witness even now.

MORCAR.

The craven!
There is a faction risen again for Tostig,
Since Tostig came with Norway—fright not love.

HAROLD.

Morcar and Edwin, will ye, if I yield,
Follow against the Norseman?

MORCAR.

Surely, surely!

HAROLD.

Morcar and Edwin, will ye upon oath,
Help us against the Norman?

MORCAR.

With good will;
Yea, take the Sacrament upon it, king.

HAROLD.

Where is thy sister?

MORCAR.

Somewhere hard at hand,
Call and she comes. [*One goes out, then enter* ALDWYTH.

HAROLD.

I doubt not but thou knowest
Why thou art summon'd.

ALDWYTH.

Why?—I stay with these,
Lest thy fierce Tostig spy me out alone,
And flay me all alive.

HAROLD.

Canst thou love one
Who did discrown thine husband, unqueen thee?
Didst thou not love thine husband?

ALDWYTH.

Oh! my lord,
The nimble, wild, red, wiry, savage king—
That was, my lord, a match of policy.

HAROLD.

Was it?
I knew him brave: he loved his land: he fain
Had made her great: his finger on her harp
(I heard him more than once) had in it Wales,
Her floods, her woods, her hills: had I been his,
I had been all Welsh.

ALDWYTH.

Oh, ay—all Welsh—and yet
I saw thee drive him up his hills—and women
Cling to the conquer'd, if they love, the more;
If not, they cannot hate the conqueror.
We never—oh! good Morcar, speak for us,
His conqueror conquer'd Aldwyth.

HAROLD.

Goodly news!

MORCAR.

Doubt it not thou! Since Griffyth's head was sent
To Edward, she hath said it.

HAROLD.

I had rather

She would have loved her husband. Aldwyth, Aldwyth,
Canst thou love me, thou knowing where I love?

ALDWYTH.

I can, my lord, for mine own sake, for thine,
For England, for thy poor white dove, who flutters
Between thee and the porch, but then would find
Her nest within the cloister, and be still.

HAROLD.

Canst thou love one, who cannot love again?

ALDWYTH.

Full hope have I that love will answer love.

HAROLD.

Then in the name of the great God, so be it!
Come, Aldred, join our hands before the hosts,
That all may see.

[ALDRED *joins the hands of* HAROLD *and* ALDWYTH *and blesses them.*

VOICES.

Harold, Harold and Aldwyth!

HAROLD.

Set forth our golden Dragon, let him flap

The wings that beat down Wales!
Advance our Standard of the Warrior,
Dark among gems and gold; and thou, brave banner,
Blaze like a night of fatal stars on those
Who read their doom and die.
Where lie the Norsemen? on the Derwent? ay
At Stamford-bridge.
Morcar, collect thy men; Edwin, my friend—
Thou lingerest.—Gurth,—
Last night King Edward came to me in dreams—
The rosy face and long down-silvering beard—
He told me I should conquer:—
I am no woman to put faith in dreams.

(*To his army.*)

Last night King Edward came to me in dreams,
And told me we should conquer.

VOICES.

Forward! Forward!
Harold and Holy Cross!

ALDWYTH.

The day is won!

SCENE II.—A PLAIN. BEFORE THE BATTLE OF STAMFORD-BRIDGE.

HAROLD *and his* Guard.

HAROLD.

Who is it comes this way? Tostig? (*Enter* TOSTIG *with a small force.*) O brother,
What art thou doing here?

TOSTIG.

I am foraging
For Norway's army.

HAROLD.

I could take and slay thee.
Thou art in arms against us.

TOSTIG.

Take and slay me,
For Edward loved me.

HAROLD.

Edward bad me spare thee.

TOSTIG.

I hate King Edward for he join'd with thee
To drive me outlaw'd. Take and slay me, I say,
Or I shall count thee fool.

HAROLD.

Take thee, or free thee,
Free thee or slay thee, Norway will have war;
No man would strike with Tostig, save for Norway.
Thou art nothing in thine England, save for Norway
Who loves not thee but war. What dost thou here,
Trampling thy mother's bosom into blood?

TOSTIG.

She hath wean'd me from it with such bitterness.
I come for mine own Earldom, my Northumbria;
Thou hast given it to the enemy of our house.

HAROLD.

Northumbria threw thee off, she will not have thee,
Thou hast misused her: and, O crowning crime!
Hast murder'd thine own guest, the son of Orm
Gamel, at thine own hearth.

TOSTIG.

The slow, fat fool!

He drawl'd and prated so, I smote him suddenly,
I knew not what I did.

HAROLD.

Come back to us,
Know what thou dost, and we may find for thee,
So thou be chasten'd by thy banishment,
Some easier Earldom.

TOSTIG.

What for Norway then?
He looks for land among you, he and his.

HAROLD.

Seven feet of English land, or something more,
Seeing he is a giant.

TOSTIG.

O brother, brother,
O Harold—

HAROLD.

Nay then come thou back to us!

TOSTIG.

Never shall any man say that I, that Tostig
Conjured the mightier Harold from his North

To do the battle for me here in England,
Then left him for the meaner ! thee !—
Thou hast no passion for the House of Godwin—
Thou hast but cared to make thyself a king—
Thou hast sold me for a cry.—
Thou gavest thy voice against me in the Council—
I hate thee, and despise thee, and defy thee.
Farewell for ever ! [*Exit.*

HAROLD.

On to Stamford-bridge !

SCENE III.—AFTER THE BATTLE OF STAMFORD-BRIDGE. BANQUET.

HAROLD *and* ALDWYTH. GURTH, LEOFWIN, MORCAR, EDWIN, *and other* Earls *and* Thanes.

VOICES.

Hail ! Harold ! Aldwyth ! hail, bridegroom and bride !

ALDWYTH (*talking with* HAROLD).

Answer them thou !
Is this our marriage-banquet ? Would the wines

Of wedding had been dash'd into the cups
Of victory, and our marriage and thy glory
Been drunk together! these poor hands but sew,
Spin, broider—would that they were man's to have held
The battle-axe by thee!

HAROLD.

There *was* a moment
When being forced aloof from all my guard,
And striking at Hardrada and his madmen
I had wish'd for any weapon.

ALDWYTH.

Why art thou sad?

HAROLD.

I have lost the boy who play'd at ball with me,
With whom I fought another fight than this
Of Stamford-bridge.

ALDWYTH.

Ay! ay! thy victories
Over our own poor Wales, when at thy side
He conquer'd with thee.

HAROLD.

No—the childish fist
That cannot strike again.

ALDWYTH.

Thou art too kindly.
Why didst thou let so many Norsemen hence?
Thy fierce forekings had clench'd their pirate hides
To the bleak church doors, like kites upon a barn.

HAROLD.

Is there so great a need to tell thee why?

ALDWYTH.

Yea, am I not thy wife?

VOICES.

Hail, Harold, Aldwyth!
Bridegroom and bride!

ALDWYTH.

Answer them! [*To* HAROLD.

HAROLD (*to all*).

Earls and Thanes!
Full thanks for your fair greeting of my bride!
Earls, Thanes, and all our countrymen! the day,

Our day beside the Derwent will not shine
Less than a star among the goldenest hours
Of Alfred, or of Edward his great son,
Or Athelstan, or English Ironside
Who fought with Knut, or Knut who coming Dane
Died English. Every man about his king
Fought like a king; the king like his own man,
No better; one for all, and all for one,
One soul! and therefore have we shatter'd back
The hugest wave from Norseland ever yet
Surged on us, and our battle-axes broken
The Raven's wing, and dumb'd his carrion croak
From the gray sea for ever. Many are gone—
Drink to the dead who died for us, the living
Who fought and would have died, but happier lived,
If happier be to live; they both have life
In the large mouth of England, till *her* voice
Die with the world. Hail—hail!

MORCAR.

May all invaders perish like Hardrada!
All traitors fail like Tostig! [*All drink but* HAROLD.

ALDWYTH.

Thy cup's full!

HAROLD.

I saw the hand of Tostig cover it.
Our dear, dead, traitor-brother, Tostig, him
Reverently we buried. Friends, had I been here,
Without too large self-lauding I must hold
The sequel had been other than his league
With Norway, and this battle. Peace be with him!
He was not of the worst. If there be those
At banquet in this hall, and hearing me—
For there be those I fear who prick'd the lion
To make him spring, that sight of Danish blood
Might serve an end not English—peace with them
Likewise, if *they* can be at peace with what
God gave us to divide us from the wolf!

ALDWYTH (*aside to* HAROLD).

Make not our Morcar sullen: it is not wise.

HAROLD.

Hail to the living who fought, the dead who fell!

VOICES.

Hail, hail!

FIRST THANE.

How ran that answer which King Harold gave
To his dead namesake, when he ask'd for England?

LEOFWIN.

'Seven feet of English earth, or something more,
Seeing he is a giant!'

FIRST THANE.

Then for the bastard
Six feet and nothing more!

LEOFWIN.

Ay, but belike
Thou hast not learnt his measure.

FIRST THANE.

By St. Edmund
I over-measure him. Sound sleep to the man
Here by dead Norway without dream or dawn!

SECOND THANE.

What is he bragging still that he will come
To thrust our Harold's throne from under him?
My nurse would tell me of a molehill crying
To a mountain 'Stand aside and room for me!'

FIRST THANE.

Let him come! let him come. Here's to him, sink or swim! [*Drinks.*

SECOND THANE.

God sink him!

FIRST THANE.

Cannot hands which had the strength
To shove that stranded iceberg off our shores,
And send the shatter'd North again to sea,
Scuttle his cockle-shell? What's Brunanburg
To Stamford-bridge? a war-crash, and so hard,
So loud, that, by St. Dunstan, old St. Thor—
By God, we thought him dead—but our old Thor
Heard his own thunder again, and woke and came
Among us again, and mark'd the sons of those
Who made this Britain England, break the North:

Mark'd how the war-axe swang,
Heard how the war-horn sang,
Mark'd how the spear-head sprang,
Heard how the shield-wall rang,
Iron on iron clang,
Anvil on hammer bang—

SECOND THANE.

Hammer on anvil, hammer on anvil. Old dog,
Thou art drunk, old dog!

FIRST THANE.

Too drunk to fight with thee!

SECOND THANE.

Fight thou with thine own double, not with me,
Keep that for Norman William!

FIRST THANE.

Down with William!

THIRD THANE.

The washerwoman's brat!

FOURTH THANE.

The tanner's bastard!

FIFTH THANE.

The Falaise byblow!

[*Enter a* Thane, *from Pevensey, spatter'd with mud.*

HAROLD.

Ay, but what late guest,
As haggard as a fast of forty days,
And caked and plaster'd with a hundred mires,
Hath stumbled on our cups?

THANE *from Pevensey.*

My lord the King!
William the Norman, for the wind had changed—

HAROLD.

I felt it in the middle of that fierce fight
At Stamford-bridge. William hath landed, ha?

THANE *from Pevensey.*

Landed at Pevensey—I am from Pevensey—
Hath wasted all the land at Pevensey—
Hath harried mine own cattle—God confound him!
I have ridden night and day from Pevensey—
A thousand ships, a hundred thousand men—
Thousands of horses, like as many lions
Neighing and roaring as they leapt to land—

HAROLD.

How oft in coming hast thou broken bread?

THANE *from Pevensey.*

Some thrice, or so.

HAROLD.

Bring not thy hollowness
On our full feast. Famine is fear, were it but

Of being starved. Sit down, sit down, and eat,
And, when again red-blooded, speak again;

(*Aside.*)

The men that guarded England to the South
Were scatter'd to the harvest. . . . No power mine
To hold their force together. . . . Many are fallen
At Stamford-bridge. . . . the people stupid-sure
Sleep like their swine. . . . in South and North at once
I could not be.

(*Aloud.*)

Gurth, Leofwin, Morcar, Edwin!
(*Pointing to the revellers.*) The curse of England! these
are drown'd in wassail,
And cannot see the world but thro' their wines!
Leave them! and thee too, Aldwyth, must I leave—
Harsh is the news! hard is our honeymoon!
Thy pardon. (*Turning round to his attendants.*) Break
the banquet up . . . Ye four!
And thou, my carrier-pigeon of black news,
Cram thy crop full, but come when thou art call'd.

[*Exit* HAROLD.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—A TENT ON A MOUND, FROM WHICH CAN BE SEEN THE FIELD OF SENLAC.

HAROLD, *sitting; by him standing* HUGH MARGOT *the* Monk, GURTH, LEOFWIN.

HAROLD.

Refer my cause, my crown to Rome! . . . The wolf
Mudded the brook, and predetermined all.
Monk,
Thou hast said thy say, and had my constant 'No'
For all but instant battle. I hear no more.

MARGOT.

Hear me again—for the last time. Arise,
Scatter thy people home, descend the hill,
Lay hands of full allegiance in thy Lord's
And crave his mercy, for the Holy Father
Hath given this realm of England to the Norman.

HAROLD.

Then for the last time, monk, I ask again
When had the Lateran and the Holy Father
To do with England's choice of her own king?

MARGOT.

Earl, the first Christian Cæsar drew to the East
To leave the Pope dominion in the West.
He gave him all the kingdoms of the West.

HAROLD.

So!—did he?—Earl—I have a mind to play
The William with thine eyesight and thy tongue.
Earl—ay—thou art but a messenger of William.
I am weary—go: make me not wroth with thee!

MARGOT.

Mock-king, I am the messenger of God,
His Norman Daniel! Mene, Mene, Tekel!
Is thy wrath Hell, that I should spare to cry,
Yon heaven is wroth with *thee?* Hear me again! . .
Our Saints have moved the Church that moves the world,
And all the Heavens and very God: they heard—
They know King Edward's promise and thine—thine.

HAROLD.

Should they not know free England crowns herself?
Not know that he nor I had power to promise?
Not know that Edward cancell'd his own promise?
And for *my* part therein —Back to that juggler, (*rising*)
Tell him the Saints are nobler than he dreams,
Tell him that God is nobler than the Saints,
And tell him we stand arm'd on Senlac Hill,
And bide the doom of God.

MARGOT.

Hear it thro' me.
The realm for which thou art forsworn is cursed,
The babe enwomb'd and at the breast is cursed,
The corpse thou whelmest with thine earth is cursed,
The soul who fighteth on thy side is cursed,
The seed thou sowest in thy field is cursed,
The steer wherewith thou plowest thy field is cursed,
The fowl that fleeth o'er thy field is cursed,
And thou, usurper, liar—

HAROLD.

Out, beast monk!

[*Lifting his hand to strike him.* GURTH *stops the blow.*

I ever hated monks.

MARGOT.

I am but a voice
Among you: murder, martyr me if ye will —

HAROLD.

Thanks, Gurth! The simple, silent, selfless man
Is worth a world of tonguesters. (*To* MARGOT.) Get thee gone!
He means the thing he says. See him out safe!

LEOFWIN.

He hath blown himself as red as fire with curses.
An honest fool! Follow me, honest fool,
But if thou blurt thy curse among our folk,
I know not—I may give that egg-bald head
The tap that silences.

HAROLD.

See him out safe.

[*Exeunt* LEOFWIN *and* MARGOT.

GURTH.

Thou hast lost thine even temper, brother Harold!

HAROLD.

Gurth, when I past by Waltham, my foundation
For men who serve the neighbour, not themselves,

I cast me down prone, praying; and, when I rose,
They told me that the Holy Rood had lean'd
And bow'd above me; whether that which held it
Had weaken'd, and the Rood itself were bound
To that necessity which binds us down;
Whether it bow'd at all but in their fancy;
Or if it bow'd, whether it symbol'd ruin
Or glory, who shall tell? but they were sad,
And somewhat sadden'd me.

GURTH.

Yet if a fear,
Or shadow of a fear, lest the strange Saints
By whom thou swarest, should have power to balk
Thy puissance in this fight with him, who made
And heard thee swear—brother—*I* have not sworn—
If the king fall, may not the kingdom fall?
But if I fall, I fall, and thou art king;
And, if I win, I win, and thou art king;
Draw thou to London, there make strength to breast
Whatever chance, but leave this day to me.

LEOFWIN (*entering*).

And waste the land about thee as thou goest,
And be thy hand as winter on the field,
To leave the foe no forage.

HAROLD.

Noble Gurth!
Best son of Godwin! If I fall, I fall—
The doom of God! How should the people fight
When the king flies? And, Leofwin, art thou mad?
How should the King of England waste the fields
Of England, his own people?—No glance yet
Of the Northumbrian helmet on the heath?

LEOFWIN.

No, but a shoal of wives upon the heath,
And someone saw thy willy-nilly nun
Vying a tress against our golden fern.

HAROLD.

Vying a tear with our cold dews, a sigh
With these low-moaning heavens. Let her be fetch'd.
We have parted from our wife without reproach,
Tho' we have dived thro' all her practices;
And that is well.

LEOFWIN.

I saw her even now:
She hath not left us.

HAROLD.

Nought of Morcar then?

GURTH.

Nor seen, nor heard ; thine, William's or his own
As wind blows, or tide flows : belike he watches,
If this war-storm in one of its rough rolls
Wash up that old crown of Northumberland.

HAROLD.

I married her for Morcar—a sin against
The truth of love. Evil for good, it seems,
Is oft as childless of the good as evil
For evil.

LEOFWIN.

Good for good hath borne at times
A bastard false as William.

HAROLD.

Ay, if Wisdom
Pair'd not with Good. But I am somewhat worn,
A snatch of sleep were like the peace of God.
Gurth, Leofwin, go once more about the hill—
What did the dead man call it—Sanguelac,
The lake of blood ?

LEOFWIN.

A lake that dips in William
As well as Harold.

HAROLD.

Like enough. I have seen
The trenches dug, the palisades uprear'd
And wattled thick with ash and willow-wands;
Yea, wrought at them myself. Go round once more;
See all be sound and whole. No Norman horse
Can shatter England, standing shield by shield;
Tell that again to all.

GURTH.

I will, good brother.

HAROLD.

Our guardsman hath but toil'd his hand and foot,
I hand, foot, heart and head. Some wine! (*One pours wine into a goblet, which he hands to* HAROLD.)
Too much!
What? we must use our battle-axe to-day.
Our guardsmen have slept well, since we came in?

LEOFWIN.

Ay, slept and snored. Your second-sighted man
That scared the dying conscience of the king,
Misheard their snores for groans. They are up again
And chanting that old song of Brunanburg
Where England conquer'd.

HAROLD.

That is well. The Norman,
What is he doing?

LEOFWIN.

Praying for Normandy;
Our scouts have heard the tinkle of their bells.

HAROLD.

And our old songs are prayers for England too!
But by all Saints—

LEOFWIN.

Barring the Norman!

HAROLD.

Nay,
Were the great trumpet blowing doomsday dawn,
I needs must rest. Call when the Norman moves—

[*Exeunt all, but* HAROLD.

No horse—thousands of horses—our shield wall—
Wall—break it not—break not—break—

[*Sleeps.*

VISION OF EDWARD.

Son Harold, I thy king, who came before
To tell thee thou should'st win at Stamford-bridge

Come yet once more, from where I am at peace,
Because I loved thee in my mortal day,
To tell thee thou shalt die on Senlac hill—
Sanguelac!

VISION OF WULFNOTH.

O brother, from my ghastly oubliette
I send my voice across the narrow seas—
No more, no more, dear brother, nevermore—
Sanguelac!

VISION OF TOSTIG.

O brother, most unbrotherlike to me,
Thou gavest thy voice against me in my life,
I give my voice against thee from the grave—
Sanguelac!

VISION OF NORMAN SAINTS.

O hapless Harold! King but for an hour!
Thou swarest falsely by our blessed bones,
We give our voice against thee out of heaven!
Sanguelac! Sanguelac! The arrow! the arrow!

HAROLD (*starting up, battle-axe in hand*).

Away!
My battle-axe against your voices. Peace!
The king's last word—'the arrow!' I shall die—

I die for England then, who lived for England—
What nobler? men must die.
I cannot fall into a falser world—
I have done no man wrong. Tostig, poor brother,
Art *thou* so anger'd?
Fain had I kept thine earldom in thy hands
Save for thy wild and violent will that wrench'd
All hearts of freemen from thee. I could do
No other than this way advise the king
Against the race of Godwin. Is it possible
That mortal men should bear their earthly heats
Into yon bloodless world, and threaten us thence
Unschool'd of Death? Thus then thou art revenged—
I left our England naked to the South
To meet thee in the North. The Norseman's raid
Hath helpt the Norman, and the race of Godwin
Hath ruin'd Godwin. No—our waking thoughts
Suffer a stormless shipwreck in the pools
Of sullen slumber, and arise again
Disjointed: only dreams—where mine own self
Takes part against myself! Why? for a spark
Of self-disdain born in me when I sware
Falsely to him, the falser Norman, over
His gilded ark of mummy-saints, by whom
I knew not that I sware,—not for myself—
For England—yet not wholly—

(*Enter* EDITH.)

Edith, Edith,
Get thou into thy cloister as the king
Will'd it: be safe: the perjury-mongering Count
Hath made too good an use of Holy Church
To break her close! There the great God of truth
Fill all thine hours with peace!—A lying devil
Hath haunted me—mine oath—my wife—I fain
Had made my marriage not a lie; I could not:
Thou art my bride! and thou in after years
Praying perchance for this poor soul of mine
In cold, white cells beneath an icy moon—
This memory to thee!—and this to England,
My legacy of war against the Pope
From child to child, from Pope to Pope, from age to age,
Till the sea wash her level with her shores,
Or till the Pope be Christ's.

Enter ALDWYTH.

ALDWYTH (*to* EDITH).

Away from him!

EDITH.

I will... I have not spoken to the king
One word; and one I must. Farewell! [*Going.*

HAROLD.

Not yet.
Stay.

EDITH.

To what use?

HAROLD.

The king commands thee, woman!

(*To* ALDWYTH.)

Have thy two brethren sent their forces in?

ALDWYTH.

Nay, I fear, not.

HAROLD.

Then there's no force in thee!
Thou didst possess thyself of Edward's ear
To part me from the woman that I loved!
Thou didst arouse the fierce Northumbrians!
Thou hast been false to England and to me!—
As . . . in some sort . . . I have been false to thee.
Leave me. No more—Pardon on both sides—Go!

ALDWYTH.

Alas, my lord, I loved thee.

HAROLD (*bitterly*).

With a love
Passing thy love for Griffyth! wherefore now
Obey my first and last commandment. Go!

ALDWYTH.

O Harold! husband! Shall we meet again?

HAROLD.

After the battle—after the battle. Go.

ALDWYTH.

I go. (*Aside.*) That I could stab her standing there!

[*Exit* ALDWYTH.

EDITH.

Alas, my lord, she loved thee.

HAROLD.

Never! never!

EDITH.

I saw it in her eyes!

HAROLD.

I see it in thine.
And not on thee—nor England—fall God's doom!

EDITH.

On *thee?* on me. And thou art England! Alfred
Was England. Ethelred was nothing. England
Is but her king, and thou art Harold!

HAROLD.

Edith,
The sign in heaven—the sudden blast at sea—
My fatal oath—the dead Saints—the dark dreams—
The Pope's Anathema—the Holy Rood
That bow'd to me at Waltham—Edith, if
I, the last English King of England—

EDITH.

No,
First of a line that coming from the people,
And chosen by the people—

HAROLD.

And fighting for
And dying for the people—

EDITH.

Living! living!

HAROLD.

Yea so, good cheer! thou art Harold, I am Edith!
Look not thus wan!

EDITH.

What matters how I look?
Have we not broken Wales and Norseland? slain,
Whose life was all one battle, incarnate war,
Their giant-king, a mightier man-in-arms
Than William.

HAROLD.

Ay, my girl, no tricks in him—
No bastard he! when all was lost, he yell'd,
And bit his shield, and dash'd it on the ground,
And swaying his two-handed sword about him,
Two deaths at every swing, ran in upon us
And died so, and I loved him as I hate
This liar who made me liar. If Hate can kill,
And Loathing wield a Saxon battle-axe—

EDITH.

Waste not thy might before the battle!

HAROLD.

No,
And thou must hence. Stigand will see thee safe,

And so—Farewell. [*He is going, but turns back.*
The ring thou darest not wear,
I have had it fashion'd, see, to meet my hand.
[HAROLD *shows the ring which is on his finger.*
Farewell! [*He is going, but turns back again.*
I am dead as Death this day to ought of earth's
Save William's death or mine.

EDITH.

Thy death!—to-day!
Is it not thy birthday?

HAROLD.

Ay, that happy day!
A birthday welcome! happy days and many!
One—this! [*They embrace.*
Look, I will bear thy blessing into the battle
And front the doom of God.

NORMAN CRIES (*heard in the distance*).

Ha Rou! Ha Rou!

Enter GURTH.

GURTH.

The Norman moves!

HAROLD.

Harold and Holy Cross!

[*Exeunt* HAROLD *and* GURTH.

Enter STIGAND.

STIGAND.

Our Church in arms—the lamb the lion—not
Spear into pruning-hook—the counter way—
Cowl, helm; and crozier, battle-axe. Abbot Alfwig,
Leofric, and all the monks of Peterboro'
Strike for the king; but I, old wretch, old Stigand,
With hands too limp to brandish iron—and yet
I have a power—would Harold ask me for it—
I have a power.

EDITH.

What power, holy father?

STIGAND.

Power now from Harold to command thee hence
And see thee safe from Senlac.

EDITH.

I remain!

STIGAND.

Yea, so will I, daughter, until I find

Which way the battle balance. I can see it
From where we stand: and, live or die, I would
I were among them!

CANONS *from Waltham* (*singing without*).

Salva patriam
Sancte Pater,
Salva Fili,
Salva Spiritus,
Salva patriam,
Sancta Mater.*

EDITH.

Are those the blessed angels quiring, father?

STIGAND.

No, daughter, but the canons out of Waltham,
The king's foundation, that have follow'd him.

EDITH.

O God of battles, make their wall of shields
Firm as thy cliffs, strengthen their palisades!
What is that whirring sound?

* The *a* throughout these hymns should be sounded broad, as in 'father.'

STIGAND.

The Norman arrow!

EDITH.

Look out upon the battle—is he safe?

STIGAND.

The king of England stands between his banners.
He glitters on the crowning of the hill.
God save king Harold!

EDITH.

—chosen by his people
And fighting for his people!

STIGAND.

There is one
Come as Goliath came of yore—he flings
His brand in air and catches it again,
He is chanting some old warsong.

EDITH.

And no David
To meet him?

STIGAND.

Ay, there springs a Saxon on him,
Falls—and another falls.

EDITH.

Have mercy on us!

STIGAND.

Lo! our good Gurth hath smitten him to the death.

EDITH.

So perish all the enemies of Harold!

CANONS (*singing*).

Hostis in Angliam
Ruit prædator,
Illorum, Domine,
Scutum scindatur!
Hostis per Angliae
Plagas bacchatur;
Casa crematur,
Pastor fugatur
Grex trucidatur—

STIGAND.

Illos trucida, Domine.

EDITH.

Ay, good father.

CANONS (*singing*).

Illorum scelera
Pœna sequatur !

ENGLISH CRIES.

Harold and Holy Cross ! Out ! out !

STIGAND.

Our javelins
Answer their arrows. All the Norman foot
Are storming up the hill. The range of knights
Sit, each a statue on his horse, and wait.

ENGLISH CRIES.

Harold and God Almighty !

NORMAN CRIES.

Ha Rou ! Ha Rou !

CANONS (*singing*).

Eques cum pedite
Præpediatur!
Illorum in lacrymas
Cruor fundatur!
Pereant, pereant,
Anglia precatur.

STIGAND.

Look, daughter, look.

EDITH.

Nay, father, look for *me!*

STIGAND.

Our axes lighten with a single flash
About the summit of the hill, and heads
And arms are sliver'd off and splinter'd by
Their lightning—and they fly—the Norman flies.

EDITH.

Stigand, O father, have we won the day?

STIGAND.

No, daughter, no—they fall behind the horse—

Their horse are thronging to the barricades;
I see the gonfanon of Holy Peter
Floating above their helmets—ha! he is down!

EDITH.

He down! Who down?

STIGAND.

The Norman Count is down.

EDITH.

So perish all the enemies of England!

STIGAND.

No, no, he hath risen again—he bares his face—
Shouts something—he points onward—all their horse
Swallow the hill locust-like, swarming up.

EDITH.

O God of battles, make his battle-axe keen
As thine own sharp-dividing justice, heavy
As thine own bolts that fall on crimeful heads
Charged with the weight of heaven wherefrom they fall!

CANONS (*singing*).

Jacta tonitrua
Deus bellator!
Surgas e tenebris,
Sis vindicator!
Fulmina, fulmina
Deus vastator!

EDITH.

O God of battles, they are three to one,
Make thou one man as three to roll them down!

CANONS (*singing*).

Equus cum equite
Dejiciatur!
Acies, Acies
Prona sternatur!
Illorum lanceas
Frange Creator!

STIGAND.

Yea, yea, for how their lances snap and shiver
Against the shifting blaze of Harold's axe!
War-woodman of old Woden, how he fells
The mortal copse of faces! There! And there!
The horse and horseman cannot meet the shield.

The blow that brains the horseman cleaves the horse,
The horse and horseman roll along the hill,
They fly once more, they fly, the Norman flies!

Equus cum equite
Præcipitatur.

EDITH.

O God, the God of truth hath heard my cry.
Follow them, follow them, drive them to the sea!

Illorum scelera
Pœna sequatur!

STIGAND.

Truth! no; a lie; a trick, a Norman trick!
They turn on the pursuer, horse against foot,
They murder all that follow.

EDITH.

Have mercy on us!

STIGAND.

Hot-headed fools—to burst the wall of shields!
They have broken the commandment of the king!

EDITH.

His oath was broken—O holy Norman Saints,

Ye that are now of heaven, and see beyond
Your Norman shrines, pardon it, pardon it,
That he forsware himself for all he loved,
Me, me and all! Look out upon the battle!

STIGAND.

They thunder again upon the barricades.
My sight is eagle, but the strife so thick—
This is the hottest of it: hold, ash! hold, willow!

ENGLISH CRIES.

Out, out!

NORMAN CRIES.

Ha Rou!

STIGAND.

Ha! Gurth hath leapt upon him
And slain him: he hath fallen.

EDITH.

And I am heard.
Glory to God in the Highest! fallen, fallen!

STIGAND.

No, no, his horse—he mounts another—wields

His war-club, dashes it on Gurth, and Gurth,
Our noble Gurth, is down!

EDITH.

Have mercy on us!

STIGAND.

And Leofwin is down!

EDITH.

Have mercy on us!
O Thou that knowest, let not my strong prayer
Be weaken'd in thy sight, because I love
The husband of another!

NORMAN CRIES.

Ha Rou! Ha Rou!

EDITH.

I do not hear our English war-cry.

STIGAND.

No.

EDITH.

Look out upon the battle—is he safe?

STIGAND.

He stands between the banners with the dead
So piled about him he can hardly move.

EDITH (*takes up the war-cry*).

Out! out!

NORMAN CRIES.

Ha Rou!

EDITH (*cries out*).

Harold and Holy Cross!

NORMAN CRIES.

Ha Rou! Ha Rou!

EDITH.

What is that whirring sound?

STIGAND.

The Norman sends his arrows up to Heaven,
They fall on those within the palisade!

EDITH.

Look out upon the hill—is Harold there?

STIGAND.

Sanguelac—Sanguelac—the arrow—the arrow!—away!

SCENE II.—FIELD OF THE DEAD. NIGHT.

ALDWYTH *and* EDITH.

ALDWYTH.

O Edith, art thou here? O Harold, Harold—
Our Harold—we shall never see him more.

EDITH.

For there was more than sister in my kiss,
And so the saints were wroth. I cannot love them,
For they are Norman saints—and yet I should—
They are so much holier than their harlot's son
With whom they play'd their game against the king!

ALDWYTH.

The king is slain, the kingdom overthrown!

EDITH.

No matter!

ALDWYTH.

How no matter, Harold slain?—
I cannot find his body. O help me thou!

O Edith, if I ever wrought against thee,
Forgive me thou, and help me here!

EDITH.

No matter!

ALDWYTH.

Not help me, nor forgive me?

EDITH.

So thou saidest.

ALDWYTH.

I say it now, forgive me!

EDITH.

Cross me not!
I am seeking one who wedded me in secret.
Whisper! God's angels only know it. Ha!
What art *thou* doing here among the dead?
They are stripping the dead bodies naked yonder
And thou art come to rob them of their rings!

ALDWYTH.

O Edith, Edith, I have lost both crown
And husband.

EDITH.

So have I.

ALDWYTH.

I tell thee, girl,
I am seeking my dead Harold.

EDITH.

And I mine!
The Holy Father strangled him with a hair
Of Peter, and his brother Tostig helpt;
The wicked sister clapt her hands and laugh'd;
Then all the dead fell on him.

ALDWYTH.

Edith, Edith—

EDITH.

What was he like, this husband? like to thee?
Call not for help from me. I knew him not.
He lies not here: not close beside the standard.
Here fell the truest, manliest hearts of England.
Go further hence and find him.

ALDWYTH.

She is crazed!

EDITH.

That doth not matter either. Lower the light.
He must be here.

Enter two CANONS, OSGOD *and* ATHELRIC, *with torches. They turn over the dead bodies and examine them as they pass.*

OSGOD.

I think that this is Thurkill.

ATHELRIC.

More likely Godric.

OSGOD.

I am sure this body
Is Alfwig, the king's uncle.

ATHELRIC.

So it is!
No, no—brave Gurth, one gash from brow to knee!

OSGOD.

And here is Leofwin.

EDITH.

And here is *He!*

ALDWYTH.

Harold? Oh no—nay, if it were—my God,
They have so maim'd and murder'd all his face
There is no man can swear to him.

EDITH.

But one woman!
Look you, we never mean to part again.
I have found him, I am happy.
Was there not someone ask'd me for forgiveness?
I yield it freely, being the true wife
Of this dead King, who never bore revenge.

Enter COUNT WILLIAM *and* WILLIAM MALET.

WILLIAM.

Who be these women? And what body is this?

EDITH.

Harold, thy better!

WILLIAM.

Ay, and what art thou?

EDITH.

His wife!

MALET.

Not true, my girl, here is the Queen!
[*Pointing out* ALDWYTH.

WILLIAM (*to* ALDWYTH).

Wast thou his Queen?

ALDWYTH.

I was the Queen of Wales.

WILLIAM.

Why then of England. Madam, fear us not.

(*To* MALET.)

Knowest thou this other?

MALET.

When I visited England,
Some held she was his wife in secret—some—
Well—some believed she was his paramour.

EDITH.

Norman, thou liest! liars all of you,
Your Saints and all! *I* am his wife! and she—
For look, our marriage ring!
[*She draws it off the finger of Harold.*
I lost it somehow—

I lost it, playing with it when I was wild.
That bred the doubt! but I am wiser now . . .
I am too wise . . . Will none among you all
Bear me true witness—only for this once—
That I have found it here again? [*She puts it on.*
And thou,
Thy wife am I for ever and evermore.
[*Falls on the body and dies.*

WILLIAM.

Death!—and enough of death for this one day,
The day of St. Calixtus, and the day,
My day, when I was born.

MALET.

And this dead king's,
Who, king or not, hath kinglike fought and fallen,
His birthday, too. It seems but yester-even
I held it with him in his English halls,
His day, with all his rooftree ringing 'Harold,'
Before he fell into the snare of Guy;
When all men counted Harold would be king,
And Harold was most happy.

WILLIAM.

Thou art half English.

Take them away!
Malet, I vow to build a church to God
Here on this hill of battle; let our high altar
Stand where their standard fell... where these two lie.
Take them away, I do not love to see them.
Pluck the dead woman off the dead man, Malet!

MALET.

Faster than ivy. Must I hack her arms off?
How shall I part them?

WILLIAM.

Leave them. Let them be!
Bury him and his paramour together.
He that was false in oath to me, it seems
Was false to his own wife. We will not give him
A Christian burial: yet he was a warrior,
And wise, yea truthful, till that blighted vow
Which God avenged to-day.
Wrap them together in a purple cloak
And lay them both upon the waste sea-shore
At Hastings, there to guard the land for which
He did forswear himself—a warrior—ay,
And but that Holy Peter fought for us,
And that the false Northumbrian held aloof,
And save for that chance arrow which the Saints

Sharpen'd and sent against him—who can tell?—
Three horses had I slain beneath me: twice
I thought that all was lost. Since I knew battle,
And that was from my boyhood, never yet—
No, by the splendour of God—have I fought men
Like Harold and his brethren, and his guard
Of English. Every man about his king
Fell where he stood. They loved him: and, pray God
My Normans may but move as true with me
To the door of death. Of one self-stock at first,
Make them again one people—Norman, English;
And English, Norman;—we should have a hand
To grasp the world with, and a foot to stamp it...
Flat. Praise the Saints. It is over. No more blood!
I am king of England, so they thwart me not,
And I will rule according to their laws.

(*To* ALDWYTH.)

Madam, we will entreat thee with all honour.

ALDWYTH.

My punishment is more than I can bear.

THE END.

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